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TLS
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FRIDAY • 8 JULY 1983 • No 4,188 • 50p

Reasons for reading Kenneth Burke

Julian Symons on Cyril Connolly

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THE TIMES

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT
Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX
JULY 8 83

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

The dance of language

Robert M. Adams

WILLIAM H. RUECKERT
Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations
326pp. University of California Press. £16.
0 520 03199 7

At the American Book Award ceremonies on April 30, 1981, Kenneth Burke received the National Medal for Literature – latest, perhaps last, and certainly most impressive of a long list of public recognitions. He was eighty-four years old at the time, and approaching, therefore, the end of a career which can be described both as fragmented between half a dozen different disciplines, and monomaniacal in its devotion to a single approach to a single topic. Between 1924 and 1966, Burke published eleven books; he has written dozens of articles and hundreds of reviews; he has given lectures and participated in conferences almost beyond number. Of recent years, he has become the focus of considerable academic attention, with several studies being devoted to the exposition of his thought, volumes in the making of which he has collaborated actively and critically. He is the most explanatory of writers, and his explanations never quite add up; he is ridden by a thesis which so far has never failed to question, subvert, and frustrate its own completion. Consequently, his reputation is extremely various. Because much of his prose is knotty and forbidding, he is altogether unknown to the larger Anglo-American readership; some philosophers and historians of literary criticism view him with total disdain as a muddle-headed, undisciplined spinner of speculations; a small but growing cult regards him as one of the great figures of our age, a seminal thinker and a prophetic teacher. The great majority of those who know his work know it in bits and pieces, scattered across a publication record of more than fifty years. To complicate matters further, though Burke has not published a new book for seventeen years now, it is a matter of public record that he has written a great many, if not all, of the components of one, designed to draw together many, if not all, of the strands of his tangled thought. He has drawn up several plans for such a book, partly congruent with one another, partly diverse; as they multiply, it seems increasingly doubtful that the climactic *Burkosophia* will ever appear – especially since major elements of it have already been included in other collections. If it ever does appear, it is just as likely to undermine as to climax the structure already in place. Clearly, a short article about such a complicated figure will have to be highly selective, and, on many matters indispensable for comprehension, painfully rudimentary.

Fortunately, some handy short cuts are available. Though Burke's books appeared, over the years, under many different imprints, and were often out of print, the University of California Press (animated mainly by Robert Zachary) has lately made available most of the major volumes. (*Attitudes Toward History* and *Permanence and Change*, the last two of the eleven, are promised for this autumn, with important Afterwords which Burke has thought it essential to subjoin.) Further, a substantial survey of Burke's work by William Rueckert, titled *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*, originally published in 1963 by the University of Minnesota Press, has now been expanded, updated, and reissued, again by California. Professor Rueckert provides an excellent introduction to Burke, generally sympathetic but occasionally critical, and providing (I think) more grounds for criticism than it takes advantage of. Rueckert enables the reader who knows a bit of Burke to relate that bit; however roughly, to the rest; and to the unpractised reader he offers excellent advice on where to start and how far to go. In making these judgments, Rueckert's occasional avoidances and abstentions are quite as significant as his explanations. He is an earnest, lucid, common-sense man who has devoted (by his own account) some twenty-five years to understanding the thought of Kenneth Burke. Where he fails silent before the complexities of an argument he would clearly love to explain, the reader, according to his temperament, will want either to plunge in or to cock an eyebrow.

In the most general and elementary of terms, then, Kenneth Burke is a critic of literature, of language, and of social relations. He has worked most of his life in and around academies, and written primarily for academic readers. Yet he never took even the basic AB degree, never followed the common academic track, never tried to take possession of a "field". (An admiring colleague once wrote that Burke's only real field was "Burkology"; with characteristic dry wit, Burke made known, in a little poem, that that was one subject he had always flunked.) Though commonly characterized as a literary critic, because he first became known in that capacity, Burke has dealt in various ways and under various circumstances with aspects of linguistics, education, economics, technology, ecology, philosophy, sociology, politics, history, psychology and religion. He has been a poet, an aphorist, a writer of stories, and the author of a series of "epistles or declamations" to which the word "novel" has been reservedly applied. For a while, he earned his living as a music critic; he has translated, mostly from the German; he has maintained with Marxism, Freudianism and Christianity bonds which are at once deep and ambiguous. These are simply some of the published aspects of Burke; among the unpublished manuscript materials, said to be voluminous, may be lurking still other aspects of the basic Burke. But it is unlikely that anything, either published or unpublished, will be found in the work of Burke which does not relate pretty closely to the theory of language which he first called "dramatistic" and then baptised "logological". Both these terms are Burkean coinages, and both point to the study of language, its inherent energies and structures, as the central area of his concern.

There are two ways to look at Burke's (or any other man's) literary criticism: in terms of the light it throws on specific works, as applied criticism; and as a self-contained body of doctrine, a system. There is room for overlap here; the difference is one of degree, not of kind, but with Burke it is important because, depending on the direction of his interests, he writes in two quite different ways. As a rule, the practical criticism is crisp, witty, piercing, and sometimes crude. Its predominant gift is for looking beneath formal structures and verbal patterns to expose the psychic patterns supplying them with energy – emphasizing, thus, analytic understanding at the expense of appearances and perhaps appreciation. In this respect, Burke is a rather surprising romantic; he believes in the expressive function of poetry for the poet, and, through a variety of symbolic transfers, for the reader or audience as well. His work as critic is often to deconstruct the poem's carefully packaged compound of subliminal attitudes by making explicit, sometimes the "inner" attitudinal components of words, sometimes their "outer" associational complexes. A joyous piece of serious mischief from Burke's first major collection of essays, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941), is a rewriting, "in behalf of the play", of Mark Antony's famous speech over the body of Julius Caesar, from Shakespeare's drama. (The exercise was originally intimated in Burke's first published book, *Counter-Statement*.) As he recites the famous lines ("Friends, Romans, countrymen," etc), Antony interpolates Burkean explanations of how the Roman audience in the play and the English audience in the theatre are being manipulated in their attitudes. "Your sympathies have been poisoned", Antony warns his audiences. "Caesar a conqueror, a monarch by reason of his attainments? Yet he was deaf in one ear. He had the falling-sickness . . . . Cassius was a better swimmer than Caesar. . . . And worst, for an emperor, on a night of storms and portents, he appeared on the stage in his nightgown – so let him die. For such reasons as these you are willing to put a knife through the ribs of Caesar". The preparation of a victim on whom significant psychic burdens can be off-loaded is the latent action here brought to light in a reversal of one of Burke's best aphorisms: "a poem is the dancing of an attitude". Here the attitude is reconstructed from the dance, which in the process becomes a sardonic Burkean, not an incantatory Shakespearean, performance.

A more radical aspect of Burke's critical analysis proceeds by looking into the associational clusters of a text – seeking to discover, as Burke puts it, "what goes with what". In itself, this does not seem even particularly original. John Livingston Lowes for Coleridge (1927) and Carolyn Spurgeon for Shakespeare (1935) had worked to identify characteristic clusters of imagery as constituent elements of a poem's effect. Burke's interest in the motives underlying a text invited him to seek dominant values in ultimate terms, which though not actually present in the text could be sensed in disguised form behind it. Working from Freudian premises, Burke decreed that everything evil, ominous or threatening in a poem could be understood as a veiled expression of the "Demonic Trinity".

the three excretory functions of faeces, urine, and semen. Though classic mechanisms such as repression and avoidance might obliterate direct references to these fundamental human functions, varieties of word-play such as puns, off-rhymes, assonances, and distant metaphors could imply them, and thus alert the vigilant critic.

This exercise Burke undertook to perform, with varying success. Nothing very surprising attended the demonstration that *Alice in Wonderland* was largely concerned with toilet training (a more extended Freudian translation of *Alice* by Phyllis Greenacre in 1955 left little to startle the knowing reader). But when Burke proposed to reinterpret Keats's Grecian Urn into Urine, and the vessel's final message to mankind as "Body is turd, turd body", he got as many shock waves as one might anticipate. That the poem expresses some contempt for the mere life of the body (as well as a shrinking from mere cold aestheticism) there's no question: what one does to a delicate structure of tonal values by reducing attitudes to their crudest ultimates is another matter. The brute reductive potential of Burke's practical criticism was and still remains a toad to be swallowed by those who find his larger theoretical formulations more than usually stimulating.

In fact, Burke has turned increasingly and deliberately away from literary criticism as the structures of dramatism and then logology have come to absorb his interests. Two exceptions are a considerable corpus of Shakespearean commentary and a pair of tributes to contemporary poets. Neither gives much opportunity for exercise of the critical system, such as it has become. His Shakespearean essays (on *Othello*, *Antony*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon*, most notably) artfully combine rhetorical analysis with the assumption that the prime work of a tragedy is to manipulate guilt. The criticism is notably intensive; each play is treated as a self-contained unit but with a recurrent interest in the vitriolic, vituperative hero, whose prototype Burke refers to in a poem as "Saint Thersites". The character-trait, more frequent in satiric spokesmen than in tragic heroes, stirs Burke to acute but not always wide-ranging reflection. His approach permits little reference to historic variables like those caught up in the catch-phrase "Jacobean melancholy", nor does he give any weight to the example of Jonson's sullen *Sejanus*, with its "Aesopian" use of Imperial Rome to mask seventeenth-century discontents. To see the plays structurally, he sometimes seems ready to reduce them to skeletons. By no means does he give the impression we get from a less methodical man like Swinburne, of being immersed in the literature for its own sake, and able to evoke, as from a keyboard, the full sonorities of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Yet his special angle of vision yields special insights into the purgative functions of vituperation, and their interplay with the decking out of a satisfactory tragic sacrifice.

The two essays on modern poets Roethke and William Carlos Williams) offer a convenient approach to Burke's intellectual "system" for the special reason that they are completely untouched by it. The first is a quite straightforward account of Roethke's imagery, the other an affectionate personal tribute to Doctor Williams. Their simplicity and directness of approach contrast with the elaborate [illegible] which, since its appearance, first publication, *Counter-Statement* (1931), has seemed to constitute almost a separate aspect of his personality. Very much like Coleridge, with whom in his early years he was fascinated, Burke can turn the metaphysical vein on or off as with a light-switch. This is the more peculiar as his central concern is not metaphysics proper, but the most intimate of themes, human motivation. Still, complications were inevitable. As human motives are conditioned pervasively by language as such, but also by instincts and institutions, fears and ideals – all of which are subject to multiple disguisings, metaphorical substitutions, repressions, and sublimations – the system required from the first a prose and a structure of its own, both of which even devoted Burkeans often find opaque. And the theoretical ideas seem to have developed in all but complete independence of critical particularities. From time to time Burke calls on a literary text to illustrate a point or serve as a model for a demonstration; but he calls quite as readily on the social sciences, the philosophers or the theologians; and he works quite as cheerfully with popular novels of modest pretensions as with acknowledged "masterpieces".

Kenneth Burke photographed by Betty Rueckert, reproduced from Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke *edited by William H. Rueckert (University of Minnesota Press, 1969).*

With or without a "system" at his disposal, Burke would be an ingenious, impish commentator on the human comedy; he has a bright, metallic mind, as exciting for its glints and flashes as for its solid constructs. But one doesn't get from Burke, as one does from Northrop Frye, for example, a sense that systematic study of major texts went into the making of the intellectual structure.

What, then, is the system? It is a theory of language and language-conditioned behaviour, built on a couple of very distinct attributes of human nature. Man for Burke is by definition a symbol-using animal, with an inherent and essential capacity for language. A direct consequence of possessing language (and more than possessing it as an option, being committed to it as we are committed to eating, breathing, and standing on our *hind legs*) is man's command of a sphere otherwise unknown to nature, that is, the negative. Language and its special gift for the negative (as exemplified in the "thou shalt nots", in "no trespassing" signs, policemen, legal codes, and property restrictions) are at the root of all morality, all order, all social hierarchy. Consequently they are responsible for an essential, an inherent human guilt; and a properly comprehensive and incisive study of language – philology in the widest possible sense of the word – can be both diagnostic and therapeutic for the human condition. "Toward a Better Life" is not just the title of one of Burke's books, it is a leit-motif of much of his work.

The special modern problem, as Burke sees it, is the predominance in life of technology with its limited vocabulary of scientism; thus man has become the servant of his own tools and the victim of a Cyclopean language, monocular in its focus on positivist facts. Given this basic definition of society and its discontents, "dramatism" is Burke's term for analysis and application of those myriad devices by which, in a society largely dominated by words and a literature largely composed of them, men manipulate their innate guilt. The resources available to us turn out to be practically limitless. We may repress our guilt, transfer it to a scapegoat, sublimate it in an equivalent, placate it in a ritual, seek forgiveness in a prayer, mortify it in an actual or symbolic suicide, or normalize it as part of a structure. All these are varieties of catharsis, since the only thing to be done with generic guilt is, so far as possible, to get rid of it. Hence the central importance of dramatic action as the most inclusive metaphor available to Burke for understanding and giving healthful direction to human motivation.

In another direction, analysing the dynamics of works of art enables Burke not only to see structures of affiliated energies, but to recognize a hierarchy of verbal powers, culminating for each particular poem, author, philosophic system or social order in one or several terms of highest valency. The strategies used to approach these ultimate terms, which by dialectical paradox can be described only in negations, are so similar to those used to approach the godhead, that Burke can work out an extended analogy between a naturalist logology based on words and Christian thelogy based on The Word. This isn't just an ingenious play on "words", it is the basis for an ongoing mutual interrelationship by which the two disciplines modify and enrich one another, generating from their differences an ever-deeper sense of their similarities, and vice versa. The Burkean system never tires, in Joyce's phrase, of "piling bildung supra bildung"; symptomatically, the final half-sentence of *The Rhetoric of Religion* is "but it's more complica—" And this is why, in attempting to summarize Burke's "doctrine", one is always haunted by the memory of innumerable little codicils and afterthoughts, reconsiderations and reformulations, which he is continually affixing to the work he has already done. The structure grows, not simply upwards, but sideways, and as it were from the inside out – as if the very statues in their niches continued to enlarge by a queer kind of individual vitality, even while the cathedral itself was still rising.

Such, in the briefest of briefs, is the broad plan of Burke's thought – so far. Studying works of literature with such preoccupations in mind leads to frequent brilliant insights, both literary and philosophical – though, as logology aspires to be more inclusive than either, even Burke's best *apercus*, when seen from outside his special circumference of concerns, often look like by-blows. A further difficulty is his idiosyncratic and often iridescent vocabulary of "victimage", "god-terms", "terministic screens", "the Upward Way", and the like. While they may account in part for the rage felt by professional philosophers with Burke's work, they delight the practised Burkeist with a sense of metaphorical amplitude, of language being taxed to the utmost. In some degree, it is true, every critic is concerned like Burke with discovering "what goes with what", which values prevail in a particular work or author. But the agile and various dialectic of his system, animated by his own dogmatic scepticism, enables Burke to do this leap and peep work particularly well – to see structures behind surfaces, recognize functions behind façades, and define the special operations of "difficult" tragic heroes like Timon and Coriolanus. Though his analyses of *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* do not revolutionize, they deepen appreciation of those gentle books; his various sibylline commentaries on Coleridge build on and also enrich the work of his predecessors.

But it is Saint Augustine's *Confessions* that provide the critic with his happiest hunting-ground, for he deals here with a consummate rhetorician describing in powerfully charged theological language the central crisis of his own intimate life. Here "logology", with its gift for fanning out families of semi-cognate words like a deck of cards, for shuttling between high and low levels of speech, for seeing the personal in the abstract and vice versa, not only delights the spectator but illuminates the text. Like a lot of Burke's best work, his discussion of the *Confessions* is a personal performance, as with frock coat, white gloves, and strobe lights; yet as a demonstration of a slowly, matured and fully grasped intellectual system, it goes far beyond flash. The book of which it forms a part, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, must be recognized as high-voltage intellectual work, authentic as well as exemplary.

And yet there is always something precarious about Burke's work, as if he were deliberately courting danger or dismissal. On the way to where he knows he is going, he teases the reader, as Coleridge used to do, with blunderings and blitherings; he distracts, he delays, he tantalizes with a rag of gaudy terminology, only at the last minute to . . . For example, Burke has a conviction that much which passes for sexual passion in courtship amounts in reality to covert social ambition. It's a relatively familiar point, and if one exemplified it in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* or any other novel touched by the picaresque tradition, demonstrations would be superfluous, absurd. Burke, more ambitious, tries to demonstrate the pattern of hierarchy overriding sexual feeling in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (*A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1950, pp 212-221). Venus as immortal goddess relates to mortal Adonis in the same way as the aristocracy relates to the middle class "with its 'cult of acquisition' – Adonis as huntsman". The boar must then be allegorized as the lower orders. This is clearly heavy-handed allegory, and in the poem as written it does not work very well. Adonis is not the aggressive and rising middle class, he is the reluctant victim; Venus is clearly the sexual predator in the poem, and the boar's slaying of Adonis corresponds better to the 1917 Revolution than to anything Shakespeare could have known. Hunting was not a middle-class activity in Shakespeare's day, nor did it carry the overtones of acquisition. And so forth; the objections are innumerable. Seemingly unimpressed with his own allegory, Burke shifts briefly to another one: Venus as mother-figure tries to seduce Adonis, a young man suffering from Oedipal guilt; the boy now converts appropriately to homosexuality. But this twist, though undeniably it adds overtones, does nothing to tidy up the poem, to which Burke now proposes to apply a "socioanagogic" interpretive process. And just here, where the self-respecting reader must surely be on the point of throwing in the towel, things come abruptly clear. For in the new process,

emphasis is placed upon the hierarchic mystery (the principle of secular divinity, with its range of embarrassment, courtship, modified insult, standoffishness, its possible meteorological dignifications, its scenic embodiment in the worldly equivalent of temples, ritual vestments, rare charismatic vessels, and the like).

The sacramental hierarchy first celebrated in *Venus and Adonis* is ruined by the action of the poem; order itself is overthrown. Venus has been outclassed, Adonis, though partly apotheosized, is lost in the process; the poem ends on Venus's bitter prophecy of a world turned upside down, love converted to endless cruelty and conflict. Burke's erratic yet triumphant analysis suggests a way in which Shakespeare's poem evokes from a world of secular status a complex mystery to which it gives luminous presence; it suggests a social shining through a sexual story. And I think that is a conclusion worth waiting and working for.

At his best, then, Kenneth Burke is a richly rewarding writer about literature, as about other topics; his failures, which like everything else about him are not trifling, might be of more consequence if he had attempted what the old-fashioned terminology used to call "followers" or "disciples". Happily, this is not so. Those who are attracted to Burke are drawn by his independence, his energy, his holy irreverence; and the last is not the least of these. Applying it to him, one is more than ever in his spirit; his thought could not be so bold in the end, if it were not ready sometimes to sound foolish along the way. One must grasp thankfully what one can receive, and overlook the failings as those of a great man who took many chances in our behalf when it would have been easy to avoid them – and who merits, in return, nothing less than our affection.

Dangerously indignant

Neil Corcoran

NEAL BOWERS

Theodore Roethke: The Journey from I to Otherwise

228pp. University of Missouri Press. £13.50.
0 862 0347 7

"Joe danger," Beckett said when trying to bring Joyce and Vico into relation, "is in the neatness of identifications." Neal Bowers's book, which wants to bring manic depression and mysticism into some relation, and to interpret Theodore Roethke's poetry in the light of it, might be thought to risk such a danger; but it suffers in fact from a sloppiness of identifications. In the preface alone, manic depression and mysticism are said to be "one and the same", to "closely resemble" each other, and to be "the same thing". Elsewhere, they are said to be "parallel", and occasionally they are made equivalent: "manic (or mystical)".

Since both manic depression and mysticism are, as Bowers frequently admits, notoriously difficult to define, this lack of decision and blurring of focus are not conducive to clarity of argument. What the book's thesis seems to reduce to as a result is that a pattern can be discovered in Roethke's poetry which has interesting correspondences to the mystical pattern of awakening, purgation, illumination, dark night and union as defined in Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*; a work with which Roethke was clearly very familiar. But even this thesis, which seems acceptable enough, at least in part, is stated in an unacceptable way when we are told that "while Roethke may not have been a mystic, his poetry is unquestionably mystical". Undecided terminology finds a focus here, I think, in unintelligibility.

The actual pattern as Bowers traces it is, however, intelligible, since it has always been clear that Roethke's work is intimately involved in the psychological processes of regression, and in the will towards union with the external, natural world, in an attempt to discover personal wholeness. It will be clear enough to most readers of the poetry how, in some rather vague way, Underhill's terminology may be applied to these processes. Unfortunately, the effort can do little with the poetry at any level other than that of the simply descriptive. There is little discrimination among the poems, and the still vexed question of form in the later work is largely unexamined. If one senses something factitious about the exegesis, one is all the more ready to feel that Bowers's pattern behaves in a rather procrustean way with the poetry, and that this study misses something important about Roethke.

What that is is most plainly stated in the poetry towards the end of the *Last Son* sequence. There, Roethke suddenly, and uniquely, disintegrates into prose to complain about "that pellucidous Jesus-shimmer over all things". Where, he asks, is "the great rage of a rocking heart, the high rare true dangerous indignation?" "Pellucidous" is dangerously indignant, an enraged shriek of a word unknown to the *OED*. And one answer to the question posed here is, of course, "Yeats", which is where Roethke went for it again and again in his later poetry.

In trying to assimilate him to a Western Christian mystical tradition, a tradition in which Roethke was manifestly interested in a scholarly way, Neal Bowers manages curiously to domesticate him. He emphasizes the anguish and torment of the work, but fails to take sufficient stock of its specific rages, hatreds, lusts, obscenities, babblings and tomfooleries. The ecstasies and illuminations are constantly doing battle with a great energy of indignation. Jarrell thought Roethke, not ironically, the powerful Donatello baby", and the stances as characteristic as the reverent, tender openness: "I'm tired of all that, Bag-Foot. I can hear small angels any time . . . Who ever said God sang in your fat shape?"

Relaters, good or bad

Liam Hudson

HANS J. EYSENCK with BETTY NICHOLS KELLY

. . . 'I Do': Your Guide to a Happy Marriage

223pp. Century. £6.95.
0 7126 008 6

STEVE DUCK

Friends, For Life: The Psychology of Close Relationships

181pp. Brighton: Harvester. £12.95.
0 7108 0481 4

A quarter of a century ago, personal matters – friendship, marriage – seemed an unfit topic for research: intangible, and tawdry too, in that the private subtleties of human exchange might be turned, by means of research, into something public and dull. Such preconceptions have since softened. Intimacy has come to be seen as a mystery worth unpacking. Of the strategies open, the psychoanalytic has held the most promise. Books like Laing and Esterson's *Sanity, Madness and the Family*, and, more recently, Robert Stoller's studies of sex and gender, have been received as especially remarkable, in that they offer a glimpse into the abyss, the chaos that habit can serve to disguise.

Meanwhile, empirical research has plodded on its way; and summarizing statements are now beginning to appear. Of the books under review, one is a pot-boiler, devised for the fast-food market, by one of academic psychology's most distinctive voices; the other a conspectus by a member of the up-and-coming.

To those who still place faith in the scholarly virtues, the style of Hans J. Eysenck's . . . *'I Do'* is a shock. The reduction of research to toothsome morsels, each a paragraph or two long, with headings like "A fix on happiness", "Vive la différence", "Femi(-nist) fatale?", and "Toying with sex", the liberal use of cartoons (*some quite good*) and of illustrations (*uniformly dismal*); and the inter-polation of questionnaires and summaries of other people's research: all this makes for a sense of fun, but also for muddle. While the professor and his ghost, Betty Nichols Kelly, have been at pains to be clear, sentence by sentence, the connecting fabric of argument suffers, and it does so both in detail and in the broader sweep.

Professor Eysenck's central contention seems simplicity itself. Some of us are born happy, others not. If we are born happy, we will usually have happy marriages; if not, we won't. He also points out that while like tends to marry like as far as intelligence and personal attractiveness go, like shows no tendency to marry like in the realm of personality. His recommendation to the young is that they should "know themselves", and that they should seek mates whose personalities resemble their own. But if this means more than that the happy should know that they are happy, and seek out others who are happy, while the sad should know that they are sad and seek out others who are sad, this is not clearly explained.

Without doubt, Eysenck has a sharp eye for detail and an inventive turn of mind. One looks for excitement, therefore, in the fine grain of the research he describes. Here and there, one finds it. He touches, for example, on the marriages of twins, commenting that when pairs of twins marry one another, the paths their matrimonial careers follow are in every observed instance the same. One would sorely like to know more about the matrimonial choices of identical twins, especially those reared apart. Unbeknownst to one another, do they choose the same sort of spouse, and do their marriages come unstuck for the same sort of reason? Unfortunately, the professor and his ghost have already moved on.

At another point, Eysenck reports that the happily married women are those who express higher satisfaction with their sex lives than do their husbands – a surprising detail, because it is usually husbands who report the greater satisfaction. We await elucidation. But what we get is comment as offhand as it is vague: "The best advice I can offer is that women should try to increase their own sexual satisfaction scores, just as they should be encouraged to increase their score on libido". Are women being encouraged to be more libidinous, one wonders, in order to get higher scores on the professor's tests; or, a more radical suggestion, to get higher scores on his tests in order to become more libidinous? And what of the implication that happily married women are happy not because they enjoy their sex lives, but because they enjoy them more than do their husbands? We are left in mid-air. The professor's mind, you sense, is elsewhere.

. . . *'I Do'* has been assembled on the premise that readers' minds will close if any topic lasts longer than a television advertisement; and that they will close, too, if asked to witness the

One of eighty-two line drawings by Tomi Ungerer, reproduced from Rigor Mortis *(Zürich: Diogenes. 3 257 00319 6).*

movement from evidence to argument at first hand. Even if substantially correct, it is a saddening position to have reached. It is a relief of sorts to turn to Steve Duck. *Friends, For Life* is altogether more patient. In it, the author seeks to describe the steps whereby friendships of varying degrees of intimacy occur. Rather than talking about test scores he casts himself in the role of natural historian. The establishment of a relationship, he stresses, is very much a matter of skills which, if need be, we can acquire.

Dr Duck has a lazy way with a sentence, however. The nanny who raps our knuckles each time we dribble or leak seems to play no part in his psychic life. As a psychologist, one learns to accept shoddy sentences as part of the puritanism of science: the belief that research should not rely on the blandishments of style in order to put the good news across. But, here, deeper misgivings stir. Consider this sample from page 44: "The effects of self-esteem are often general and affect all of someone's behaviour, not just actions in a beginning relationship. However, researchers have also discovered other psychological 'governors' that affect people's willingness to become involved in relationships. Individuals have other general friendship drives that affect their vigilance and their trust of other people . . .". And so on.

"A beginning relationship", "psychological 'governors' ", "general friendship drives": dubious clusters of adjectives and nouns limp after one another across the page. These, it might be said, are the rhythms and cadences that give the social sciences a bad name, creating in our Prime Minister, among others, the urge to squeeze the new universities between finger-nail and thumb. But is Duck simply being careless? I think not. In his quiet way, he is luring his readers towards an ideological conclusion of deep significance: one which ignores any distinction of principle between friendship and passion, liking and loving, acquaintanceship and intimacy. Our relation with lover or spouse is in essence the same as the one we strike up with doctor or air hostess, only more so. "Clever and deft relaters are good at light, quick touches on the arms, or perhaps they straighten someone's collar, or tap them lightly in a way intended to indicate what sort of feelings the partner has about being touched." And the intimacy that results from the exercise of these social skills? Duck is no man for romantic niceties. "Indeed", he reassures us, teetering to the brink of illiteracy to do so, "one definition of intimacy depends on 'what you scratch in front of whom and whose it is'!"

While Eysenck offers science in the service of a reassuringly old-fashioned conception of marriage and its rewards, Duck is, I suspect, more revolutionary: "In fact sexual activity does not distinguish husband-wife pairs from many other sorts of couple. . . . The activity that separates married couples from everyone else is that they spend more time watching TV together!" The baffled cravings, the fertile ambivalences and contradictions of passionate attachment are hygienically removed. The Dostoevskian heritage is expunged. Do we believe Duck? Is he describing a shift that has already occurred in the way most of us behave, or is he conducting a polemic? I put down *Friends, For Life* uncertain; but knowing, in any case, that if enough polemical books are written and believed, they become descriptions by default.

Faced with this depressing prospect, each of us scratching a pal in the privacy of our lodgings, I discovered in Eysenck's vision an unforeseen compensation. If we are indeed the pawns of the genetic code, at least the stubborn individuality of our desires is guaranteed. Armed with a faith in our resilience, we can then address a centrally placed mystery around which both . . . *'I Do'* and *Friends, For Life* skirt. Namely, that when we fall in love and plight our troth, we do so with rapt attention but, as often as not, with a person who is inappropriate. Eysenck's answer is that our behaviour is in this respect random; that we live in a state of panmixia. Notoriously, though, the scientifically inclined describe as "random" those complex causal processes that they lack the means to analyse or understand. It is here that psychoanalytic writers have a head start that neither Professor Eysenck's text nor Dr Duck's begins to threaten.

Functioning, or not

Anthony Clare

PRUDENCE TUNNADINE

The Making of Love

223pp. Cape. £8.95.
0 224 01948 1

How many people have sexual problems? In his survey of sexual behaviour in young people, Michael Schofield reported that 57 per cent of his British subjects reported sexual problems of some sort, suggesting that having sexual difficulties is, statistically speaking, the "norm". Five years ago, a paper appeared in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* entitled "Frequency of Sexual Dysfunction in 'Normal' Couples".

The inverted commas around "normal" appeared justified by the comments in the paper, for the authors found that in analysing the responses of 100 well educated, happily married American couples to a questionnaire, 40 per cent of the men and 63 per cent of the women reported some degree of sexual difficulty and/or dissatisfaction. After much serious discussion of the possible methodological shortcomings of the study, the authors concluded that sexual dysfunctions "were more likely to reflect a combination of education deficits, inhibitions, physiologic problems and interpersonal conflicts". There was some comfort drawn from the fact that the couples involved were apparently able to "tolerate a relatively high frequency of specific sexual dysfunctions and still feel very positive about their sexual relations and their marriages".

When I first read that American paper I wondered how long it would be before those hundred couples, moved by the heightened marital and sexual expectations of the times, would add their demands to the clamour for "therapy" which is a feature of contemporary medical services. Faced with the latest in a long line of books devoted to the subject of sexual harmony, I wonder yet again whether Prudence Tunnadine's serious, solid and reasonably sensible views will reassure people that there is more to marriage than optimally functioning genitalia. Or whether they will merely water the seeds of disenchantment.

That there are people, and many of them too, who experience serious sexual problems, problems such as premature ejaculation, impotence, vaginismus, anorgasmia, is unarguable, and Dr Tunnadine, adopting a no-nonsense, factual style, provides numerous and highly readable examples. She and her colleagues at the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine insist that they avoid treating people as "cases" and prefer to see them as "people who are unhappy, yearn for knowledge, sympathy, information and support". The theoretical basis for the work is eclectic although the book is laced throughout by a psychoanalytic flavour which injects such notions as the Electra complex and castration phantasies at the most unexpected moments. However, it is far from clear to what extent, if at all, a psychoanalytic training is necessary for someone to be a sexual counsellor, although it does not appear to matter very much because virtually everything that Tunnadine and her colleagues do can be justified by appealing to a much less complicated explanatory system:

. . . Listening, coaxing, reassuring, being prepared to let the patient see a little of the therapist's own fallibility and humanity, plus some behavioural techniques and clinical skills of a good physician – these are the virtues, knowledge and skills which Tunnadine endorses. It makes good sense, although we know little of the efficacy of what she does for this is not a scholarly treatise. There is nothing in the way of a follow-up and little systematic information concerning the socio-economic and educational status of the people who present themselves for help. Individual case-histories abound and run a familiar gamut, from initial depression and despair through curiosity and doubt concerning the possibility of improvement to a breathless gratitude when Tunnadine has been successful. The chapter headings, like the case-histories, are simultaneously dramatic and opaque – "Images of Ourselves", "Phantasies Explored", "Fertility and Parenting" – but the final chapter, intriguingly entitled "Who Dares Wins", could indeed be taken as the sum total of human wisdom concerning many sexual problems and their resolution save for the inexplicable fact that it turns out to be about premenstrual tension and the menopause.

The Child-Lovers, A Study of Paedophiles in Society by Glenn D. Wilson and David N. Cox (132pp. Peter Owen. £9.95. 0 7206 0603 9) presents comprehensive data gleaned from the questionnaire responses of seventy-seven members of PIE, the British paedophile organization. The book explores the social backgrounds and sexual behaviour of paedophiles, their personalities and mental health as revealed by the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, and there is a set of detailed interviews.

The inferno of relativism

Hugh Thomas

Paul Johnson

A History of the Modern World from 1917 to the 1980s

817pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.50. 0 297 78226 6

Paul Johnson has written a remarkable book which is more complex than it seems at first sight. It is a powerful, lively, compelling and provocative political history of the world since 1917: the political element is always decisive, the sciences having only a modest role and the arts figuring merely as illustration. Though chronological, the book devotes thematic chapters to what Mr Johnson thinks of as the scandal of the Versailles Settlement; the fraud of the Russian Revolution; the contemptible collapse of China and the fearsome rise of Japan in the 1930s; the Nazis; the feebleness of the democracies and their empires between 1919 and 1939; the American dream in the 1920s and then, almost worst of all for the author, Roosevelt. There is a skilful meshing together of all these elements in a long section on the Second World War.

The post-war world is considered in the same fashion, though the issues are less amenable to sharp definition. Johnson takes as much pleasure in pointing to the failures of post-imperial Africa in his chapter entitled "Caliban's Kingdoms" as he does to the Chinese chaos before 1939. His chapters on what he sees as the sanctimonious India of Nehru and the bloodstained China of Mao are also unrelentingly contemptuous, well-written polemics of power and fury. But the great merit of the book considered as political history is that it makes the historical record since the Second World War exceptionally interesting and diverting, even enthralling: a really remarkable achievement, even if the effect is obtained largely by dwelling on the evils of our time.

At another end, presumably in the mind of the author more important, level, the book is a moral tale, with a purpose. This purpose is explained in the first chapter, "A Relativistic World", which begins with an account of the intellectual and moral consequences of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Just as there once used to be straight lines and crooked ones, there was once guilt and innocence, evil and good. Now there is relativism. Things fell apart, the best lacked all conviction and the worst . . . . But Johnson's view is not so much Yeatsian as Nietzschean: "The greatest event of recent times, that God is dead, is beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe." Among the "advanced races, the decline and collapse of the religious impulse left a vacuum". The history of modern times is essentially about how "that vacuum has been filled". The most successful candidate to fill it has been the "will to power for its own sake". In place of religion, there has been secular ideology. Those who, in the past, were in the ranks of the totalitarian clergy became totalitarian politicians. Not by chance was Stalin a failed seminarist. "The end of the old order, with an unguided world adrift in a relativistic universe, was a summons to a new kind of statesman to order and to [illegible]." Most of the book, which illustrates the disasters of the twentieth century in considerable detail, is a development of this theme. It is not of course a new theme. Scepticism as to whether man could survive without the general explanation of life, history and death which is implicit in religion, occupied many nineteenth-century writers. Matthew Arnold and Tocqueville, otherwise so different, agreed with Napoleon I in his judgment that "the people must have a religion"; perhaps even when he added "and that religion must be in the hands of the government". And George Orwell said of our time, "power worship is the new religion of Europe".

What is, however, undoubtedly new is the gusto with which Paul Johnson illustrates how appallingly the twentieth century has behaved in consequence of adopting "the relativist heresy". Nothing so melancholy as Arnold's vision on Dover Beach soothes these pages. There is no sympathy for those who merely "await the spark from heaven". Few of the leaders who have come to power since 1917 escape Johnson's castigation. Lenin's personal and public inhumanity; Hitler's colossal delusions; Mao's brutal vulgarity; Stalin's conspiratorial appetite for blood; Amin's negligent ruthlessness; Bokassa's fatuous self-indulgence; Mussolini's doomed dreams; Sukarno's follies; Castro's single-minded pursuit of tyranny – they are all here, left-wing dictators and right-wing ones, prophets and philosophers, dons and dullards, soldiers and civilians.

Nor is it only the obvious villains who come under Johnson's well-directed fire. Equally at risk are the well-meaning, the self-deceiving, and the ineffective. In Johnson's hands, such figures as Gandhi and Nehru, Kennedy and Carter, Eden and Chamberlain are made to appear as forsaken as the crazed despots with whom they ineffectively clashed. Roosevelt, Keynes, Freud and, above all, Edwin Montagu, the liberal Indian politician whom it is plausible to see as the intellectual author of Independence – a terrible failure of nerve for Johnson – are presented as atrocious too.

This emphasis on men, rather than measures, statistics or economic forces, is a notable feature of the book. Thus, in talking of Hitler and Stalin, in the "watershed year 1941", Johnson says that the "historian cannot but be astounded by the decisive role of the independent will". Hitler and Stalin "played chess with humanity". Stalin's diseased personality led him to sign the Nazi-Soviet pact without consulting anyone; Hitler alone determined on a war of annihilation against Russia: their lieutenants "obeyed blindly, or in apathetic terror". The nations over which they ruled "seem to have had no choice but to stumble in their wake towards ruin". Naturally: since it is, says Johnson, "when the moral restraints of religion are removed that the power to suspend, or unleash, catastrophic events does not devolve on the impersonal benevolence of the masses, but falls into the hands of men who are isolated by the very totality of their evil natures".

Mr Johnson often captures the personality of his victims brilliantly. The now forgotten leaders of Japan and China, in particular those of the years before and during the Second World War, are especially well brought out. Often, as in the cases of Gandhi, Montagu and Hammarskjöld, the portrait is little more than caricature and, in the case of the last two, very unfair caricature too. But Johnson has no wish to be charitable. Like Dante, in Virgil's company, looking into the next world, he sees nothing much of which to approve. The few persons whom he places in *Paradiso* are almost as grotesque as his villains: Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Warren Gamaliel Harding are the real heroes, followed by Eisenhower and, a little less explicitly, Nixon. The only British statesman of whom Johnson appears to approve is Churchill. But de Gaulle, Adenauer, de Gasperi and Truman also "come through" well.

The general intellectual framework behind these racy pages is interesting: we read on page 56 that the great error of the peace-makers in 1919 was to neglect the "traditional idea and continuing economic interests" which before 1914 had urged the nationalities of Central Europe to live together. That attempt – exercise in multi-racialism – Austria-Hungary, might already have been in the process of being torn apart by 1910 or so. But once that was complete, the essential legitimacy which old Europe had once had was destroyed. It was the same with the Chinese and Ottoman Empires. Essentially Johnson thus turns his back not only on the twentieth century but on everything which has happened since the Enlightenment. Indeed, one cannot help wondering about the Enlightenment itself.

After all that, the reader is bound to wonder what the conclusion will be. What general moral position will Johnson reach at the climax of his fury? Surely he is too violent a hater of evil to leave the traveller quite without hope? As might be expected, there is a good passage about Pope John Paul II. But the main conclusion is odd. First, Johnson is encouraged by the increasing appreciation that the state cannot do much to save us after all, despite the long-held popular view to the contrary: it has "proved itself an insatiable spender, and unrivalled waster . . . the great killer of all time". But also, as a consequence of the discovery of the double helix at Cambridge (a university which otherwise comes in for abuse because of certain over-publicized events there in the 1930s), and the development of sociobiology, there is hope that men can be genetically programmed to improve by conscious action. Because of this, the book ends on an optimistic note, and one for which the previous 700-page trek through hell and purgatory has not prepared us. But can this be done without "a return to God . . . . Or at least some other *transcendental philosophy*"? And what would the Pope say of such programming? To omit any discussion of that question, in view of the importance of the theme throughout the book, seems a little illogical.

That societies are unlikely to prosper, or even survive, unless they have a generally accepted code, is a proposition on which most of us would be in broad agreement with Paul Johnson. But religion is not the only possible source of such a code. Religious societies, too, have often been violent, turbulent and unjust. The sufferings of present-day Iran stem from a régime which demands strict adhesion to religious laws. There have been Christian societies in which iniquity flourished, and arbitrariness prevailed. Franco's rule between 1939 and 1945 is a case in point.

I had hoped that the conclusion of Johnson's book would have made clear how North America, Europe, Australia, Japan and the democratic countries in Latin America can make common cause, intellectually or ideologically, and so preserve what is now generally defined as "the West", or "the free world" (this, despite certain inadequacies of the spirit, such as religious doubt, which are not likely to vanish by order). In this, the reader may be a little disappointed.

I have also one or two reservations about Johnson's attitude to Leninism, and hence Marxism-Leninism, a theory which occupies a large part of his book. Not, to be sure, that I challenge his view that Lenin, not Stalin, initiated the concentration camps, the political police, the contempt for the rule of law, and guilt by association, all things on which Stalin later built so successfully his own chambers of horror. That is well depicted by Johnson, and with irresistible logic. But, as is perhaps natural in a pupil of A. J. P. Taylor (himself influenced in this by Namier, who so despised ideas), he underestimates the ideological factor. Marxism-Leninism may be a false ethic but it is nevertheless the fundamental collection of beliefs and tactics which have been used to justify the policies of Lenin and his successors. It may not be taken seriously by the Russian people but it is surely considered very seriously by their leaders.

It is inevitable in works of such length that there should be mistakes. Books like this cannot be written to everyone's satisfaction. Experts on special themes will light on Johnson's treatment of Hammarskjöld in the Congo, say, or Dr Adenauer's dismissal in 1945 from the post of mayor of Cologne. Among subjects neglected by Johnson, there is the treatment of the German population of east and central Europe after 1945: never had the policy of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" been more vigorously imposed than in that supposedly post-biblical era, as the neglected but indefatigable Alfred de Zayas has shown.

There is also an important passage about population which calls for correction. Johnson attributes increase in population generally to scientific medicine, and to public health schemes; so that when the death rate is cut, the birth rate may remain at its old "replacement rate". Thereafter, a rise in living standards will cause the birth rate to fall. Between the first and second of these phases, however, "population jumps and [this] may produce violent consequences". According to Johnson, in Europe this process began with the Industrial Revolution, and was complete by the 1970s. This seems to me to be an inexact picture of what occurred in Europe, though it may have some relevance to what is happening now in the rest of the world. The truth is that population grew in Europe (including Russia), in Asia and probably in Africa, between 1700 and 1850, without the slightest contribution from improved medicine, whose beneficial consequences followed Lister's and Pasteur's innovations and achievements in the 1860s.

In Evelyn Waugh's war trilogy *Sword of Honour*, the central figure, the arch-Catholic, Guy Crouchback, hears of Churchill's decision to back Stalin in 1941. He alone of his acquaintances is distressed. Johnson and Crouchback see eye to eye over that decision, as over other things. The great difference between them, though, is the demonic drive which here, as elsewhere, marks Johnson's work – as well as the ruthlessness, the wit, the lack of compromise, the almost physical dislike of weakness.

Early on in his book, Johnson quotes Freud: "Not for the first time, a prophet in his fifties, long in the wilderness, had suddenly found a new audience"; and, he goes on, "by encapsulating emergent trends over a wide range of academic disciplines, he appeared to be presenting, with brilliant panache and masterful confidence, ideas which had already been half formulated in the minds of the élite". Words which perhaps could be applied to the author himself? From his remote hermitage – "That tower is Iver, sir, not Ivory" – Mr Johnson sets a punishing standard. Woe betide the politician who fails to live up to it.

A pen and ink drawing by Tomi Ungerer. For publication details see page 717.

Objects of devotion

M. R. D. Foot

Geoffrey Best

Honour Among Men and Nations: Transformations of an Idea

108pp. University of Toronto Press. £11.40 (paperback, £6). 0 8020 2459 9

Geoffrey Best's lectures in 1981 at the University of Western Ontario, on the Joshua Goodman foundation, derive from his study of *Humanity in Warfare*, which came out in the same year. With a keen historian's eye, he assesses the weight carried by the concept of honour in human conduct during the past two centuries, mainly but not solely, on battlefields. He follows Norman Hampson's concept (published in 1973) that the Jacobins nationalized honour, in revolutionary France in the early 1790s. He understands what preoccupies officer classes; why it is that some officers can so easily get worked up about points of honour, how it is that others can so easily put their consciences to rest. He concentrates mainly on the cases of France and Germany: France racked by the Dreyfus case, and by the choice between Pétain and de Gaulle, Germany under "that most maladroit of rulers Kaiser Wilhelm II" and under Hitler. He is struck, as Allied generals were struck in 1944–5, by "the paradoxical phenomenon of such genuine respect for legality, such cult of chivalry, and such sense of honour in the army, which twice within twenty-five years lent itself to the most hegemonic imperialism on the European continent and, on the second occasion, missed every opportunity over ten years to avoid the Nazi stain."

He moves on to notice a further shift in the concept of honourable conduct: the emergence of the idea that even devotion to Decatur's "My country right or wrong" needs in the end to give way to devotion to human kind as a whole. Neither the League of Nations, with so many great powers absent, nor the United Nations with its strong resolutions and weak sanctions, has yet provided an adequate focus for men of honour, whose ancestors' devotion was to a medieval monarch's person. Yet the idea of honour remains well dug in, even in nonsecular revolutionary states. In a wonderful postscript, devoted to topics he had no time to pursue in the lectures, Professor Best reminds his readers that, in the USSR, one of the nine main lists of military crimes is officially headed "Insubordination and breach of military honour". If any honour beyond the lemmings' rush over the precipice of war, lies before humanity, it is most likely to lie in some such broadened beyond Decatur's old honourable men and women shall behave. This elegantly argued and beautifully printed book opens up a subject of interest and importance.

Feeling for a foothold

Otto Pick

Bhabani Sen Gupta

The Afghan Syndrome: How to live with Soviet Power

266pp. Croom Helm. £12.95. 0 709 0477 0

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has so far been somewhat inconclusive as a military operation, but, as Bhabani Sen Gupta asserts in *The Afghan Syndrome*, it has proved to be a political watershed. The book under review is not really about Afghanistan, but represents an attempt to analyse Soviet policy in a global context and to provide an outline of the international repercussions of the crisis. It is, however, an exaggeration to claim, as Dr Gupta does, that it marked "the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global, interventionist power". The Soviet Union's rise to superpower status began with the victories of the Soviet Army in 1943, it was confirmed by the explosion of the first Soviet atom bomb in 1949, and Khrushchev's Cuban adventure was an early attempt to assert the USSR's position as a world power with world-wide interests. In 1962, the USSR lacked the means to back up its claims but much has been done since then to redress the balance.

Brezhnev's main achievement was to have bequeathed to his successors a military machine which aspires to parity with the United States and which disposes of truly global capabilities. The expansion of the Soviet Navy, accelerated though not necessarily initiated by the outcome of the Cuban missile crisis, and the decline of Western influence in Africa and Latin America, caused largely by Western mistakes, have played their part in transforming the correlation of forces. The USSR certainly gave evidence of interventionist tendencies in Africa and elsewhere long before the invasion of Afghanistan, and its actions in the Horn of Africa demonstrated its ability to sustain such policies.

Interpretations of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan differ widely, but two trends seem to predominate. The first interpretation claims that the Soviet move into Afghanistan was merely the first step on the road which would bring Russian troops to the Gulf of Oman, within striking distance of the Straits of Hormuz through which oil tankers proceeding from the Persian Gulf have to pass. It is thought possible that the USSR would be able to take advantage of the instabilities which afflict Pakistan by encouraging irredentist movements in Baluchistan and, if necessary, intervening to support them in order to gain a further foothold on its march towards the Gulf. There is little doubt that the ramshackle and reactionary régime in Pakistan could be destabilized without much difficulty. On the other hand, if the Soviets were to take this plunge, the risks would be incalculable. The effect on Soviet influence in the Middle East and among the uncommitted countries would be catastrophic, the conflict between Iraq and Iran would probably be replaced by an anti-Soviet coalition and the United States would find it almost impossible to stand aside. Soviet foreign policy, though essentially opportunistic in its approach, has been marked by a considerable degree of caution, which was only abandoned on one occasion, in 1962. The Cuban adventure proved to be one of the nails in Khrushchev's coffin, and it is extremely unlikely that Brezhnev, who authorized the invasion of Afghanistan, or Andropov, who still has to consolidate his personal position, would have wished to follow their predecessor's example. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that should the Russians ever want to project their power southwards through Pakistan, they would first have to control Afghanistan.

There are, of course, a simpler explanation. The bloody conflicts among the various so-called Communist factions in Kabul might have provided an opportunity for Chinese initiatives and were rapidly creating a power vacuum in a very sensitive area. The leaders of the Soviet Union could not tolerate the prospect that the control of an important buffer state on their southern frontier might fall into hostile hands, and they also could not allow an allegedly "socialist" régime, which had been initially welcomed by Moscow, to collapse. The relative failure of their military intervention had obviously not been anticipated.

Although Dr Gupta tends to support the second of these theses, he perhaps wisely makes no attempt to arrive at a definite judgment about Soviet motives. In the final analysis, the Soviet Union was driven both by the perceived need to secure a threatened advantage and the natural desire to seize an opportunity to assert Soviet power – it is impossible to guess which factor carried the greater weight.

Regardless of why the Russians decided to invade, the fact that they did so has served to transform the international situation. The crisis in Afghanistan has acted as a catalyst in the disintegration of détente. It caused President Carter to withdraw the SALT II agreements before their ratification could be refused by the US Senate and this interrupted the process of negotiating about arms control for a year. It encouraged those in the Carter administration who supported Brzezinski's policy of playing the China card for all its worth in order to limit the USSR's opportunities for diplomatic manoeuvre. Ultimately, it provided tangible arguments for the advocates of greatly increased US expenditure on arms, who claimed that the Soviet Union's propensity to use force when necessary must be countered by an American capability to respond with equal weight. This last view has dominated the thinking of the Reagan administration and has been largely instrumental in bringing about the present impasse in East-West relations.

Gupta provides a most perceptive account of American reactions and he also offers a convincing analysis of the ambivalent diplomacy pursued by both India and Pakistan. Mrs Gandhi's equivocal attitude reduced any influence which India might have been able to exercise, but at least General Zia, by rejecting US offers of aid in February 1980, perhaps inadvertently prevented the crisis from escalating to unmanageable proportions. Indian and Pakistani responses to recent events in Afghanistan have again demonstrated that the heirs of the Raj are much more concerned with the regional conflict between themselves than with the wider question of relations between the two superpowers. Unfortunately, Gupta makes no attempt to probe West European reactions to Afghanistan – the Europeans have on the whole held to the view that the Americans over-reacted and they have clung to the residues of détente, rejecting the view that what they regarded as a purely regional crisis in a remote part of the world should be allowed to have an overriding impact on East-West relations. This divergence has been accentuated by events in Poland and has indubitably affected the West's ability to cope with Soviet diplomatic initiatives.

Gupta concludes with a stimulating final chapter on "How to Live with Soviet Power". Although he overestimates the Soviet Union's ability to control Afghanistan by military means and attaches too much importance to the Soviet intervention as an indication of Soviet power, he argues with conviction and reason that the superpowers must learn to live with one another in "mutually recognized equality" and that the middle powers must act together to bring this about. He advises the United States against "blending revolutionary ferment in the third world and Soviet might into a threat theory of unprecedented proportions" and regards "American ability to stem the tide of radical change in the third world" to be as limited as "Soviet ability to engineer third world revolutions". The present international environment is very different from the conditions which led to the confrontations of the "cold war", and the international system cannot return to a state of affairs when it was dominated by the overwhelming power of the United States. A realistic *modus vivendi* in a very literal sense of the term can only be arrived at, Dr Gupta pleads, if "the Americans take a fresh hard look at the grammar of living together with a second global power". There are many in Western Europe who would agree with him.

The policeman's new lot

Leonard Schapiro

Zhores Medvedev

Andropov

227pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £7.50. 0 631 13401 8

Many perils beset the biographer of active politicians. This book appeared the day after the Central Committee Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party concluded its deliberations, and on the day that the Supreme Soviet elected Mr Andropov as Chairman of its Praesidium. Happily for Zhores Medvedev, not too much happened at the Plenum to render his work out of date, though he would probably have written somewhat differently on the role of Chernenko after the Plenum and the Supreme Soviet meeting.

More problematic was the appearance a few days before Dr Medvedev's publication date of a photograph in the Western press of an ailing and decrepit Andropov, supported by stalwart aids, and looking as little like the effective ruler of all the Russias as it is possible to imagine. This raises the question of how long we can expect to see him at the helm, and whether the kind of jockeying for the succession that took place while Brezhnev was physically in decline is now in progress. It also provokes the intriguing speculation about the degree of control exercised today by the Soviet authorities, who do not seem to be able either to prevent such a photograph from being taken or stop its transmission abroad. The lack of change made by the Plenum in the composition of the Politburo is closely paralleled by what happened towards the end under Brezhnev: the Politburo was left completely unaltered at the twenty-sixth Communist Party Congress in 1982, and this was generally interpreted as symptomatic of the desire to postpone change until after the departure of Brezhnev. Perhaps there is the same premonition of death in the Politburo today.

In this context, the promotion of Romanov, the wild and dissolute First Secretary of the Leningrad party organization, to the Central Secretariat in Moscow may be significant. Romanov is already in the Politburo, but one must, in practice, be in the Central Secretariat as well before one can enter the succession race. His elevation, therefore, puts two relatively young candidates in the field: Romanov is sixty, the other, Gorbachev, is fifty-two. Since an appointment to the Central Secretariat requires Politburo approval, Romanov's new post would seem to indicate the existence of a group which would resist Gorbachev's succession as General Secretary, and would suggest that the parties are already lining up.

Of Andropov the man, as Medvedev rightly points out, it is impossible to write, for lack of information. He adduces a certain amount of rumour, based on newspaper reports. But since a good deal purveyed by correspondents is inevitably KGB disinformation (Andropov's "liberalism", for example) it is difficult to attach much value to such conjectures. One is on more certain ground when dealing with the style of government of individuals, and when analysis is built squarely on one's knowledge of the Soviet government system. Take the question of the Chairmanship of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, for instance. Much ink has been spilt in the newspapers (and, by Medvedev in his book) on Andropov's failure to secure this Chairmanship at the outset. But the Chairmanship is, in fact, a time-consuming post without influence of any kind. Brezhnev's acquisition of it very late in his career was due solely to his inordinate vanity. There is no reason to suppose that Andropov is particularly vain. According to Medvedev, Andropov promised the post to Chernenko during the run-up for the succession, and then went back on his word. A much more likely explanation is that he has tried to persuade his rival – or the nearest to a rival he has – to take this highly honorific post, which would have the effect of removing him from the really influential Secretariat and headship of its important General Department. When he failed to eliminate Chernenko, he took the job himself.

Medvedev seems to me to attach far too little importance to Andropov's many years' background as head of the security service. He even suggests at one point that, as an ex-policeman, he may be able to "assuage conservative fear of reform". This is a very unlikely proposition in the case of a General Secretary who lost no time in elevating one security officer to the Politburo and to the Deputy Premiership, and another to head the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Besides, the whole of his policy of economic reform to date amounts to a fairly vigorous campaign against corruption, vigorous, at any rate, in its early stages, and a somewhat unrealistic and highly unpopular drive for better work discipline and "socialist conscience", which has already begun to slacken off. This is a policeman's idea of reform. The decline of the campaign could be due to the influence of Chernenko, whose General Department is the recipient of many thousands of complaints all the time. Chernenko has written and spoken about the need to pay heed to the people's requirements, because when the Party is out of touch with the people, "experience shows that serious political problems are inevitable". No doubt he had Poland in mind. However, suggestions that Chernenko is a rival to Andropov for supreme power are scarcely serious, nor does Medvedev suggest this. He is seventy-two, and a sick man. At the recent Plenum and Supreme Soviet meeting, his speeches were in full harmony with those of the General Secretary.

Medvedev rightly recognizes that Andropov's main concern in foreign policy is "to compete with the United States for the hearts and minds of the West European nations, both their peoples and their governments". If Medvedev is right in his contention that Andropov has inherited the mantle of the late Suslov, he is provided with an apparatus with which to bolster and promote his propaganda ploys, the International Department of the Central Committee – which is for some reason called the "Foreign" Department in this book. Not everyone will agree with Medvedev that Andropov, with his rapid succession of disarmament proposals, has made a real contribution to peace. To some of us, these offers seem designed, if accepted, to leave the Soviet Union in every case in a position of overwhelming nuclear superiority. Nor will everyone be convinced by Medvedev's criticism of United States policy on all too familiar left-wing lines.

On the whole, this is a sensible, if unexciting, book. Dr Medvedev has assembled the available facts and has examined them critically. He has added a good deal of informed Moscow gossip which, no doubt, emanates from his historian brother, Roy. He has not thrown a great deal of light on what we can expect from the new ruler of the USSR. But that is not his fault.

A sovereign and his psyche

Roger Lockyer

CHARLES CARLTON
Charles I: The Personal Monarch
426pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.
0 71009485 X

Charles Carlton's choice of sub-title for his biography suggests that this is meant to be a life of Charles the man rather than Charles the politician – though in the case of kings it is difficult, and perhaps unwise, to separate the two. In order to aid him in his task of analysing the character of this most enigmatic of monarchs, Carlton calls in the psychiatrists. This seems a sensible approach, but the trouble is that we have very little information about Charles's private life and inner feelings – nothing to compare, alas, with the wonderfully detailed, intimate and vivid account of the young Louis XIII left us by his physician, Héroard. In the absence of facts Carlton resorts to speculation, but too many of his assertions are based upon flimsy foundations. He takes it for granted that Charles went through a phase of "mild homosexuality", and a few pages later adds that because of an unduly prolonged adolescence his homosexual tendencies became more pronounced and he developed the "submissive, feminine and narcissistic self-sufficiency" characteristic of this state. The casual reader may take all this at face value, but if he consults the footnotes he will find that the only references are to the works of modern writers, ranging from Freud to D. J. West and including an essay on "The unsuccessful adolescence of Heinrich Himmler". The absence of contemporary sources is not surprising since in fact there is no hard evidence to support the proposition that Charles ever had any homosexual tendencies or was feminine or narcissistically self-sufficient (whatever this may mean).

Yet if Carlton is unduly speculative in his analysis of Charles's character he is at least trying to get behind the façade, which is all that many biographers give us. This makes his simplistic treatment of Charles's father all the more puzzling. The work of historians during the past decade has radically transformed our view of James I, yet one would never gather this from Carlton. He has what one is tempted to describe as a pathological loathing for James, describing him as growing daily "more senile and sillier", or, in a variant form, "older, sillier and more senile", until he became "quite literally . . . a dirty old man". In Carlton's view, then, it was hardly surprising that when James died it was "a relief for the whole kingdom", for by that time he was "old, pathetic and boring". Yet there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that James's subjects had considerable respect and affection for their ruler. The well-informed John Chamberlain, writing in 1619 at a time when James had been seriously ill, assured his correspondent that "all men apprehend what a loss we should have if God should take him from us, and do earnestly enquire, and in general heartily wish and pray for his welfare". James was certainly getting older with every year that passed – a not uncommon fate – but he was a mere thirty-six when he ascended the English throne and only fifty-eight when he died. And far from being senile, he spent the last year of his life – as Robert Ruigh showed us in his brilliant book on the 1624 parliament (1971) – fighting a vigorous, skilful and successful rearguard action in defence of his pacific policies against the combined pressures of his son and favourite.

It is Carlton's neglect of secondary sources which gives his account of the critical decade of the 1620s such an old-fashioned look. He works on the assumption that confrontation between King and parliament was inevitable, which was far from the case; he makes the quite unjustified assertion that "if any single issue caused the breakdown of Charles's first parliament it was recusancy"; and he suggests that Charles's "determination to impose his will on parliament may have been intensified by the need to compensate for not being able to do so with his wife", which comes close to absurdity. There are, it is true, one or two places where "revisionist" views are acknowledged, but they stand out like an ill-applied veneer and merely weaken the existing interpretation without substantially modifying it.

Carlton's decision to concentrate on Charles's personality may be explained by the fact that he is obviously ill at ease in the political world of early Stuart England, as is shown by the extraordinary number of errors he perpetrates. To take just one example: in 1621 James asked parliament for supply and reminded members that during his eighteen years as King he had only received six subsidies and four fifteenths. Carlton transforms this into a statement that the King actually asked for "six subsidies and four-fourteenths" (*sic*), and adds the surprising information that this request was "well received". Nor is this an isolated slip. Among many others are Carlton's belief that Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset, was a Marquis; that the Christian name of Sir Thomas Wentworth was Peter; that John Williams's successor as Lord Keeper was somebody called Sir John Conway, and that a later occupant of this high office was Secretary Windebank; that Theobalds, one of the largest houses in England, was a "lodge"; and that Greenwich Palace lies some twenty miles upstream from Whitehall.

When he moves into the non-political aspects of the eleven years' Personal Rule Carlton is more at home. He is good on Charles as an art collector; on the details of Court life; and on the growing warmth between the King and his volatile French wife. Unreliability returns with the summoning of the Long Parliament – for despite Carlton's statement to the contrary it was not Pym who introduced the bill of attainder against Strafford – but matters improve again when the author follows the King to Oxford and traces his fortunes during the Civil War. Just as Charles shed much of his diffidence and grew in confidence now that the issues had been simplified, so Carlton sheds some of his more irritating mannerisms and produces a clear, well-supported, and at times moving account of these traumatic years. Yet even here he sabotages his own work by failing to maintain the appropriate standards of accuracy, particularly when he is quoting from primary sources. He mangles a poem by Cowley; he has Charles instructing Hamilton "to possess yourselves in Edinburgh and Stirling" when what the King actually told him was "to possess yourself of my castles of Edinburgh and Stirling"; he describes how Charles, after checkmating the parliamentary forces in the West Country, wrote to Prince Rupert that "had our enemies been either deferred or of another kind, nothing but a direct miracle could have served us" when the King's actual words were "had our success been either deferred, or of another kind, nothing but a direct miracle could have saved us"; he even manages to misquote Sir Jacob Astley's famous prayer on the battlefield of Edgehill.

In short, this is a book that one approaches with high hopes but leaves with a sense of deep disappointment. For the general reader Pauline Gregg's biography (1981) is more reliable, John Bowles's (1975) more stylish. As for specialists in the early Stuart field, they will have to wait until the appearance of a biography of Charles I, the *political* monarch, which sets him within the context not only of his own time but also of the historical research which is doing so much to change our picture of it.

High thinker's hideaway

Jeremy Catto

FRANK STUBBINGS (Editor)
The Statutes of Sir Walter Mildmay for Emmanuel College
156pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0 521 24750 0

The history of the University of Cambridge has yet to be written. Its early centuries and Tudor golden age were chronicled by J. B. Mullinger; but on Mullinger's vast canvas, encompassing Oxford, Paris, the Italian humanists and the German reformers, Cambridge itself had only a subordinate place. If he did less than justice to the medieval and Renaissance Cambridge masters, however, the fault, or virtue, lies with them, wilfully anonymous within their college walls: who now remembers the astronomical tables of John Holbrook, Master of Peterhouse, or the calculations of Provost Argentine of King's? The fifteenth-century founders of Cambridge science wrote for themselves or their immediate circle, and perhaps unwise, to separate the two. In order to aid him in his task of analysing the character of this most enigmatic of monarchs, Carlton calls in the psychiatrists. This seems a sensible approach, but the trouble is that we have very little information about Charles's private life and inner feelings – nothing to compare, alas, with the wonderfully detailed, intimate and vivid account of the young Louis XIII left us by his physician, Héroard. In the absence of facts Carlton resorts to speculation, but too many of his assertions are based upon flimsy foundations. He takes it for granted that Charles went through a phase of "mild homosexuality", and a few pages later adds that because of an unduly prolonged adolescence his homosexual tendencies became more pronounced and he developed the "submissive, feminine and narcissistic self-sufficiency" characteristic of this state. The casual reader may take all this at face value, but if he consults the footnotes he will find that the only references are to the works of modern writers, ranging from Freud to D. J. West and including an essay on "The unsuccessful adolescence of Heinrich Himmler". The absence of contemporary sources is not surprising since in fact there is no hard evidence to support the proposition that Charles ever had any homosexual tendencies or

and commentary on them, provide therefore an unusual insight into this esoteric tradition.

It is all the more welcome because of Emmanuel's decided puritanism. This was hardly a new departure, of course. The Cambridge colleges provided apt soil for the cultivation of a quietist theology with its taproots reaching down to the underground springs of private consciences, "digging deep into the heart", in the words of the fourteenth-century Cambridge religious writer Walter Hilton. If the dons were remote, they were not ineffectual in creating a cadre of puritan-minded college men in public life, among them Walter Mildmay of Christ's, Elizabeth's Chancellor of the Exchequer and founder of Emmanuel. Puritan they may have been: but the religion of Mildmay and his Cambridge contemporaries in politics and the civil service had nothing in common with the revolutionary aspirations of the sectaries; they respected authority, and when authority was unfavourable, as it was under Mary and sometimes under Elizabeth, they lay low and waited for better days.

It was in this spirit of inwardness masked by conformity, as the college statutes make clear, that Sir Walter Mildmay founded Emmanuel in 1584. He intended a body of serious-minded clergy to teach and minister, explicitly following the long procession of founders' statutes in spiritual purpose which stretched back beyond the Reformation to the earliest Cambridge colleges. It was a tradition intrinsically neither protestant nor catholic, and Mildmay was able to take the pre-Reformation statutes of Christ's (1506) as his model. At Christ's John Fisher, more ambitious than his predecessors, had framed a complete body politic, conceiving his college to be as highly organized as the human body: it would have a head (the Master), two arms (the Deans), two hands (Steward and prefect of the chest) and a "procreative member" (the Lecturer or Senior Tutor), sustained by plain living (at 12d per Fellow per week) and inspired by high thinking, the Fellows of Christ's had all their educational needs and those of their pupils supplied within the college. This was a flexible and self-sufficient model for the founder of Emmanuel, who also took from Christ's the puritan Laurence Chaderton as the first Master.

Nevertheless, there were differences, which Stubbings has pinpointed by printing the earliest college orders and a surviving guide to religious exercises. Emmanuel was soon reputed a puritan college, with its disorientated chapel, in which unsurplliced Fellows sat down to receive Communion on the infrequent occasions when it was celebrated. Laurence Chaderton's explanation of the sitting Communion to the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, as "by reason of the seats so placed as they be", was shamelessly disingenuous: behind the bland outward face of Emmanuel, the Fellows quietly persisted in their nonconforming practices, while pretending indifference to externals. The college, like Mildmay himself, was a great survivor of successive religious régimes and kept its principles to itself. Only such an intimate document as the "mutuall conference in communication of gifts among Students in Divinity", written in 1588 and printed at the end of the book, lets the secret out: the Mildmay's statute, outlining which more fruitful branch of exercises as "the College shall determine" was a device for introducing puritan "exercises of prophesying". These exercises (with their opportunities of uncontrolled religious enthusiasm) had been suppressed by Elizabeth, but there they are encouraged behind closed doors by her Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is not surprising that in the same document the Fellows ordered that "no man which is not of the company bee made party to that whiche is done amongst us". Two hundred years before, Walter Hilton's advice to contemplatives hints that the Emmanuel of Mildmay and Chaderton was not the first esoteric, intimate coterie to subsist, half-hidden, in Cambridge. Nor was it, of course, the last. Frank Stubbings is to be congratulated on bringing to light another corner of this fitfully glimpsed landscape.

Godly priorities

Anthony Fletcher

WILLIAM HUNT
The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County
367pp. Harvard University Press. £24.
0 674 739035

The Puritan Moment is not so much a county study in the now traditional mould as a synthesis of the work of other historians, which also draws heavily on quarter-sessions materials at Chelmsford and contemporary pamphlet writings. William Hunt's purpose is to present an overall argument about Essex's response to national events and developments in the period from the 1570s to 1642. He has written a well-researched and stimulating book. His style is engagingly candid if sometimes brash; his zest and enthusiasm carry the story along.

The book is in two distinct halves. In the first an account of the economy of the shire is followed by a discussion of social policy and the Puritan "code of redemption" which, Hunt argues, provided its impetus. He firmly establishes the extent and early impact of poverty in Essex. However, in explaining the increasing number of landless labourers, he perhaps leans rather more heavily than the evidence warrants on the assertiveness of the landlord class and gives less emphasis than he might have done to the impersonal forces of climate and the market. Following in the footsteps of Keith Wrightson, he is good on the role of parish élites in imposing the "reformation of manners", though there is a certain imprecision about how a new policy of social order and moral reform was formulated and translated into action. The preachers' activities in the government of certain parishes are carefully delineated; magistracy and the framework of county administration remain in the background. Although he may be overstating the pervasiveness of the conflict between the godly and the profane when he says that it "divided virtually every parish in southern England", Hunt is at his best on the two cultures of Elizabethan and early Stuart England. This was a society where those who believed it had been "a merry world when there was less preaching" stood resolutely against the demanding, serious men for whom religion was an intense preoccupation, carrying its implications into every aspect of daily life.

The second half of the book contains a political narrative from 1603 to the Civil War. This sheds much new light and includes a sympathetic appraisal of the role of the key figure in local politics from 1628, Sir Thomas Barrington. It only loses something of its originality when it reaches the period from 1640 to 1642, which has already been so well traversed by Clive Holmes. Hunt shows convincingly that an autonomous popular movement against Charles I's régime developed in Essex. It was based on anti-Arminianism, drew strength from anti-popery and expressed itself, from 1641, through incipient sectarianism. By the summer of 1642 the Stour valley, where long-term industrial depression had reached crisis point, was probably the most unsettled district in the whole of England. Nowhere else did economic, political and religious issues fuse so readily. This was Hunt's Puritan moment, an "evanescent synthesis" of discontents which produced a significant injection by Essex of numbers and vigour into Parliament's war effort. Yet the briefness of his Puritan moment needs to be stressed. Hunt's narrative ends at the point when Essex's minority of really militant activists had been drawn off into the national military struggle. Much of the county's second army, under the Earl of Warwick, deserted when the great man of the shire resigned his command in November 1642.

Despite a vigorously argued conclusion, the two halves of the book do not cohere. In the first half, Hunt strengthens the case made previously by others that the Puritan movement was a conservative one, reinforcing social values common to the gentry and respectable classes. In the second, he adds his voice to those who see the Civil War in ideological terms, as a struggle based on a fragile alliance between certain of the nobility and gentry and a sector of the people. He has studied two tendencies within the complex movement which historians summarize as Puritanism. Some Essex Puritans, he has shown, sought social reform; some rioted, smashing altar-rails or pulling down enclosures; some were prepared to leave their native soil to go and fight the King. What he has not shown and what needs to be considered is how far the same men did all three things.

There is a contradiction within Hunt's story that deserves further exploration. The Puritan moment in Essex – and there was such a moment in several other counties as well – was an emotional and religious experience which threatened to betray the tradition of social order which had been at the heart of English Puritanism for some six decades. Yet Hunt is never entirely at ease about what kind of men his Puritans really were. He is attracted by the apparent connection between godliness and repressive moral and social reform. He is also ready to remind us that "we shall not understand the godly unless we take their fundamental assumptions as seriously as they themselves did". The bedrock of their minds may remain elusive but there is more to be said, one suspects, about their shifting priorities. At the Dunmow muster in 1642 the Essex militia declared itself for the county, for the laws "which are the life of our liberty and peace" yet also for "religion more precious than both", to that extent at least, there was eventually a very wide consensus of opinion.

The condemned playboy

Julian Symons

DAVID PRYCE-JONES
Cyril Connolly: Journal and Memoir
304pp. Collins. £12.50.
0 00 216546 5

A drawing by Augustus John of the young Cyril Connolly serves as jacket illustration for this book, showing a face already squarish, wavy hair a little disorderly, the mouth sensual and generous. Another John drawing of the same period, frontispiece to *The Condemned Playground*, tells us more. Here a large round head rests on a plump hand, and under thick brows the eyes belie the face's heaviness with a stare of glassy idealism, a yearning for the infinite. The present work contains no illustrations and that is a pity, for they could have shown something like a brief biography of Cyril Vernon Connolly. The issue of the *London Magazine* that contained articles commemorating his seventieth birthday (August/September 1973) included pictures of the small boy wearing a sailor suit who received notes from his loving grandmother addressed to the Duke of Vernon, KCMG; Eton and Oxford Connolly with Robert Longden, one of several lovers (Longden maintained the connection between homosexuality and the English public schools by becoming headmaster of Wellington); *Enemies of Promise* and Spanish Republican supporter Connolly trudging along the road near the Franco-Spanish border; the editor of *Horizon* alertly at ease with cigarette and wineglass; and then the burly Edmund Wilsonic book-reviewer at his desk with pen in hand, or lolling slightly, hand drooping over chair arm, books from his enviable library behind him. This last figure looks assured yet sorrowful, a defeated romantic.

Such is the progress revealed in fuller detail by an oddly shaped volume. The centre of it is the Journal kept between 1928 and 1934, with a dozen final pages taking it up to 1937. This is lengthily topped and briefly tailed by David Pryce-Jones's memoir with an effect that is occasionally awkward because incidents described in the Journal are also mentioned in the memoir. The balance also seems odd, since 120 pages are given to the life before Connolly's marriage to Jean Bakewell in 1930, while the subsequent forty-odd years are disposed of in little more than twenty pages. Nevertheless, this is the nearest thing to a full-scale biography Cyril Connolly is likely to get, and David Pryce-Jones is an understanding and sympathetic biographer. He understands perfectly the Connolly device of anticipating any criticism of his conduct by making it himself, and implicitly claiming credit for his candour. "The depiction of himself as some sort of royal failure was the foundation of his success."

Thus at the peak of his reviewing form in the 1930s he called reviewing an occupation where "only the drudgery is permanent, and where no future is secure except the certainty of turning into a hack". In the ten years of *Horizon* he deplored at intervals the labour of editorial work, and with the circulation declining reflected that "a decade of our lives is quite enough to devote to a lost cause". With the magazine suspended for a year the editor would have a chance to write. If he could not do so he would accept his destiny, and return to editing. In the event the suspension was permanent, and the editor turned again to reviewing, succeeding Desmond MacCarthy on the *Sunday Times*. There he wrote a weekly article for more than twenty years, living quietly in a suburban road at Eastbourne ("Eastbourne is the right place for a man of letters", John Betjeman comfortingly said), and made pacific gestures towards some with whom he had fallen out in the past, Wyndham Lewis, Geoffrey Grigson and myself among them, by friendly reviews of their books. In vain: Lewis made scathing annotations on a copy of *The Unquiet Grave*, Grigson wrote a brief, scornful letter about the eulogies pronounced after Connolly's death.

And indeed, if one looks at the work produced and the level of the mind behind it, the eulogies do seem extraordinary, even absurd. Though he was witty, intelligent, tactful and tasteful, extremely funny – particularly in the parodies of Huxley and of fashionable 1930s Left-wing aesthetes ("Where Engels Fears to Tread") – Cyril Connolly's incurable vice, which cancelled almost all of these merits, was triviality. He was prepared to confess almost any sin, so long as he was not accused of this one. Stephen Spender, in one of the eulogies, observed rightly that "*to give himself away* is . . . his formula for wresting success from failure by taking failure as his subject", and Connolly's aims were certainly never less than lofty. The first paragraph of *The Unquiet Grave* makes it clear that only the best will do. "The true function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece", and nothing else is of much interest. So why not attempt the masterpiece? Too slothful, too fat, too greedy – he was ready to plead guilty on all these counts. But if you lacked the energy to produce the masterpiece that was in you, was anything else worth bothering about? From such a position of superiority he was able happily to declare himself a failure:

> At Eton with Orwell, at Oxford with Waugh,
> He was nobody afterwards and nothing before.

The couplet is disarming. But lack of seriousness, incurable temperamental frivolity? For one interested only in masterpieces that would have been the unforgivable sin.

The triviality is amply documented in the Journal, as it is in that for 1927 which appeared in *The Condemned Playground*. A typical extract runs:

> Visit from Molly Higgins who was rather charming, on to Robin's for sherry-in-the-dark. Rollo Hayes, rather tight, began doing his frog-into-bull-act, this time about Lady Cunard. Sidney Beer arrived to fetch someone. I asked him about Salzburg. Peggy off. "O are you an Austrian – how goody. I adore Austrian men." Dinner with Rogin and Colville, political arguments, very breezy. C. said he was only unhappy one week a year, Robin only happy same.

Try again, a year or two earlier:

> Lunched with Ivor [Novello] and we went to the Zoo in the rain, afterwards swimming at the Wellenbad. Dinner with Harold [Nicolson] and we are all go to a theatre, afterwards to a cabaret, where Gladwyn [Jebb] gives us supper. Very amusing play by Molnar, amazing how the Germans are such good and natural actors. At supper the band played the famous Berlin tango.

This kind of thing sometimes pulled up the writer of it with a feeling that it wouldn't do. Exhortations are frequent. "What is C.V.C. going to do about it?" (the wretched state of Eng Lit around 1930). "Be more ruthless, unaffected, for even in wretchedness he could not refrain from the gesture of calling himself "a genius without a cause" if Jean was not there. A consolatory letter of hers speaks with the simple candour he could never achieve: "Sleep well and dream pleasures. You are a great successful man now. Not for you a middle-aged, poorish American expatriate on-the-town girl, romantic, insufferable. You are well out of it."

Cyril Connolly in 1973

He did not think so. The basis of *The Unquiet Grave* was the grief he felt at the ending of the relationship with Jean. Added to this, and linked with it, was the deep and lasting regret he felt at the enforced separation from French life and culture in wartime so that, as he said in an introduction after the book's first appearance, he was "determined to quote as many passages as he could from the French". The link with Jean was the fact that the first and probably happiest years of their marriage had been spent in France. The effect of all those quotations from Pascal, Chamfort, Sainte-Beuve and others is to make him seem slightly like Huxley's Mr Mercaptan, that writer of delicious little middles for the weeklies, of whom the unkind said that wherever he was it was Paris. What the little book shows most clearly, however (in spite of such back-handed and confused praise as that of Stephen Spender, who said the book showed somebody who could not realize his vision, but had "the vision of the vision he has not had"), is the essentially mimetic nature of Cyril Connolly's talent. He could do you an excellent Huxley and a very reasonable Bond, sketch a lively comic picture of a totalitarian world (comic? why yes, what else?) in "Year Nine", elaborate brilliant fantasies in conversation, with just the touch of seriousness that saved them from absurdity. Faced with the need and and desire to record his own anguish on paper in a world where mimesis would not work, he had to take refuge in Palinurus the helmsman, in listing "temporary cures" for his *Angst*, and in mock-profundities like "He who would write a book that would last for ever must learn to use invisible ink." Other would-be aphorisms seem to have strayed from Noel Coward, or even from an agony aunt's column: "There are two great moments in a woman's life: when first she finds herself to be deeply in love with her man and when she leaves him." The exploration of the self was the only subject about which he could have been serious as a writer, but in the end he flinched from it here.

"That odd intelligent *farceur* Cyril Connolly": the phrase was used by Geoffrey Grigson in the 1930s, and it does not seem unjust. His relationship with Peter Quennell, a friend and literary rival from Oxford days, shows in the Journal as alternating between admiration of Quennell's industry, and a slightly patronizing tolerance of one who worked in the market-place: "A copywriter in the carnal part./Yet still a proud Augustan in his heart." Yet as the years passed he must have been aware that the industry had produced far more of worth than his own life of deliberate hedonism and negligent ease. David Pryce-Jones puts it very well: "All along, he laid claims to the *licence of the exceptional artist* while finding it almost unbearable to practise as an artist at all." He did not want the pains of writing a masterpiece, but the pleasure of having written one, so that in the end tact and taste, sense and sensibility, came to very little. In truth he was not an artist but a wit, a comic turn, an aesthetic playboy of an almost extinct kind: the condemned playboy of the Western world.

Regency style

Donald A. Low

Alison Adburgham
Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840.
344pp. Constable. £12.50.
0 09 46370 2

The novel of fashionable life is one of the neglected minor strengths of early nineteenth-century English fiction, and also a vital connecting link between the age of Jane Austen and that of Thackeray and Dickens. Hazlitt's clever label, "silver fork" novelist, applied first to Theodore Hook (who certainly deserved it), has misled generations of readers into ignoring a group of writers who include such gifted and diverse figures as the young Bulwer, T. H. Lister, and the decidedly over-ambitious but nevertheless innovative young Disraeli. These men are of interest in their own right as experimental novelists, and also as forerunners of the masters of Victorian social fiction. Also accomplished and readable is Catherine Gore, whose *Mothers and Daughters* (1831) sums up many of the concerns of its time while pointing forward to the fictional style of later connoisseurs of conduct. The list could easily be lengthened, although it would not stretch, as *Silver Fork Society* threatens to stretch it, to include all the once popular but now rightly forgotten novelists of Henry Colburn's stable.

The trouble with *Silver Fork Society* is that it misses the opportunity to deal in a truly critical and connected way with the phenomenon it seeks to assess. In the past Alison Adburgham has written informatively and enterta*ingly* on subjects ranging from the history of shopping to *Punch*, from fashion to the growth of women's magazines. Her special talent is for exhibiting the social history associated with a topic or a cluster of topics; she is good at choosing and assembling representative quotations. Prose fiction unfortunately does not lend itself to this treatment. *Silver Fork Society* brings together much of the forgotten gossip of a literary sub-culture, like Lister's *Granby*. But the reader looks in vain for literary history proper, for a cogent explanation either of what was distinctive in artistic terms about the novels described, or of the nature of the influence exerted by silver-fork novels on the next generation.

A clue to what is wrong with the book is supplied by the sub-title. Mrs Adburgham's chosen method is annalistic-cum-digressive. Given that her subject is no more sharply defined than "fashionable life and literature from 1814 to 1840", it follows that the reader is quickly in danger of feeling cut off from the world of experience beyond that of Regency and early Victorian fictional tittle-tattle. It takes the penetration of a Michael Sadleir to make an area so restricted seem enough in itself to sustain the casual visitor. There is no corrupt and fascinating city here to set against the cotton-wool unreality of Chesney Wold, for everything appears to aspire towards the Chesney Wold end of society. Or rather, the silver-fork story-writers seek time and again to simulate the surface manners of gilded upper-class living, and Mrs Adburgham is perfectly content to chart their various ups-and-down and ins-and-outs, interspersing extracts from letters and diaries of the period with extracts from her large string of novelists. (Incidentally, this leisurely manner of proceeding would not have appealed to Granby, who is described by T. H. Lister as something of a lightning traveller, a whiz-kid before his time; "A young single man always is, or ought to be, endued with the locomotive faculty in a high degree.")

It is clear that the author of *Silver Fork Society* is keenly interested in social nuances where these reveal underlying attitudes, and also in simple changes in custom. She writes, for instance, about the use of forks to eat fish in a way which puts Hazlitt in his place along with Hook: "Neither Hazlitt nor Hook made it clear that each diner was provided with *two* forks for the fish course. In the mid century, silver fish knives were introduced, but the aristocracy scorned them and continued to eat their fish with two forks – as some do to this day." On such matters *Silver Fork Society* is as delightfully readable as Fanny Trollope teaching a young nation to mind its ps and qs in *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. But why no reference to the English Cantos of *Don Juan*, Peacock on Fashionable Literature, why no controlling argument?

The returns of the writer

Richard Findlater

MICHÈLE VESSILLIER-RESSI
Le Métier d'auteur: Comment vivent-ils?
399pp. Paris: Dunod. 95fr.
2 04 015480 9

The author of this survey of the economics of professional authorship in France is a woman with unusually varied qualifications. Not only is she a professional economist who has worked for the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique since 1966 and a specialist in cultural economics, but she has written four novels (one was awarded the Prix du Quai des Orfèvres), scripts for TV films, a score of songs on record and a play whose production is said to be imminent. Her personal acquaintance with the pressures of increasing pluralism in a "revolutionized" cultural market has, no doubt, been an asset in an inquiry which embraces not only writers for print – the "pure" *écrivain* is, she says, almost extinct – but also authors of films, libretti, plays, songs, TV and radio programmes.

This umbrella category of authorship is so wide, specific information about book-writers is so narrow and the organization of writers' earnings is so different in France and Britain that it is hard to make valid comparisons of conditions between the two countries. Michèle Vessillier-Ressi herself rarely acknowledges British experience, although she occasionally cites American parallels and contrasts. As yet no comparable range of statistical sources is available here, and no research on so far-reaching, ambitious and detailed a scale has been published in Britain. But her book is stuffed with many facts, ideas and arguments which, in spite of their virtually inevitable confusion, help to make it essential reading for anyone examining the present problems and future prospects of professional writers on this side of the Channel as well, not least because it illustrates many of the pitfalls and pratfalls ahead.

In exploring the misty margins of history, jurisprudence, sociology, law, economics and politics, and scraping together mountains of factual data, Mlle Vessillier-Ressi eventually has to tackle the problem of quantifying the objects of her quest. The first obvious source is the membership of the three main authors' societies. These are the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques, which was established through the efforts of Beaumarchais in 1791 – the first of its kind in the world – and now includes writers for radio and television as well as the theatre; the Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique; and the Société des Gens de Lettres. Their total membership is nearly 75,000; but the figure seems fishy – many writers belong to more than one society, and many stopped writing long ago. A better clue is the number of accounts controlled by the societies, which collect the revenues from their members' rights. After deducting from this total the number of publishers, dead authors' estates and authors living abroad, Mlle Vessillier-Ressi arrives at a maximum of some 15,000; but *this* excludes writers for print and the cinema – book publishers have long claimed the exploitation of all subsidiary rights (with 50 per cent of the proceeds), and over 90 per cent of the accounts controlled by the SGDL are for TV and radio earnings.

How many book-writers *are* there in France? A few years ago the Minister of Culture and the French equivalent of the Publishers' Association gave the figure of 40,000, for every possible kind of author. According to the Centre National des Lettres fewer than 10,000 publish books regularly (1500 of them a year do it themselves). Most of these, Mlle Vessillier-Ressi has decided, are amateurs: from the records of AGESSA, the organization handling social security for authors, she has discovered that in 1980 there were some 2,150 registered authors earning up to 36,000 francs (of whom 1,000 were book-writers). So she puts the maximum number of professional authors at 3,000.

Persisting in her attempt to identify the members of this tiny minority, she sent a detailed questionnaire to 2,786 whose names she obtained from a pension fund (improbably, the Caisse Allocations Vieillesse des Professeurs de la Musique). She used 857 of their responses, and has combined these with about 1,000 entries in *Who's Who in France* to create a somewhat bewildering but instructive Identikit portrait of the French author. He is a man of about fifty who is far more likely than the "average" Frenchman to be a bachelor, divorced or childless. He lives in Paris, because it is impossible for his job to work anywhere else. (Nearly 40 per cent of Mlle Vessillier-Ressi's sample were born in the Paris area, and some 80 per cent live there.) His family and educational background is relatively privileged. (Nearly half the sampled authors' fathers came from the liberal professions and upper grades of society.) But among all this detail by far the most important fact is that he cannot live on authorship alone.

Confirmation of the poverty of authors' rewards may be seen in the societies' figures for 1980. Of SACD accounts for theatre earnings, nearly 75 per cent were less than 5,000 francs, and only 4 per cent were more than 50,000 francs. Radio and TV earnings were higher: but more than half the accounts were for less than 5,000 francs, and fewer than 8 per cent for more than 50,000 francs.

"There is scarcely any *homo economicus* less informed and rational than the professional author," Mlle Vessillier-Ressi contends. And of all writers, she says sixty pages later, it is the book-author who has the smallest sense of economic realities, lacking as he does those educative experiences of confrontation with film producers, actors and television executives from which other writers benefit. However argumentative, that assessment of the *écrivain*'s insulation from life may be, there seems to be no question that in France it is book-publishing which gives most authors the worst treatment. In any attempt to challenge the publishers' stranglehold over their rights, authors lack the help of literary agents, whose "bad reputation" in France is left unexplained by Mlle Vessillier-Ressi. At least two-thirds of them are published by three main groups of publisher-distributors, for whom their professional association, the SGDL, is no match. Unlike SACD and SACEM, it cannot afford to give its members supplementary pensions. It lacks not only money but power. Yet, according to *Le Métier d'auteur*, it seems impossible to set up new associations for the authors most in need: those who write for publishers and film-makers. There are up to 5,000 bookshops which live by literature, and, declares Mlle Vessillier-Ressi, make it live by making it known and loved; but very few writers – far fewer than in Britain, one suspects – live by their books and not many of these books may be accurately ranked as literature.

In looking at improvements in the author's lot in recent years – including the increase in state aid and the link to the social security system – Mlle Vessillier-Ressi recognizes the need for especial protection because of especial vulnerability, and appreciates the dangers of mass-market culture. But she also shrewdly deflates the rhetoric of Marxist oversimplifications when applied to the complex realities of contemporary authorship, and the utopian sales talk for a society where *everyone* is both the producer and consumer of cultural goodies. She warns against some kinds of economic security available in the West as well as the East, maintaining that economic and financial risk is, all things considered, the essence of an author's *métier*.

Ultimately optimistic, Michèle Vessillier-Ressi puts her faith in the corrective mechanisms of capitalism: its economic and cultural costs can be minimized by using the market to finance a new "politique de la création". Meanwhile, no doubt, the second *métier* will continue to be the pillar of French publishing, and the literary profession will continue to be, as Jules Renard said, "le seul ou l'on puisse sans ridicule ne pas gagner d'argent".

Cracking the codes

Mary Warnock

HOWARD DAVIS and PAUL WALTON (Editors)
Language, Image, Media
326pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50 (paperback, £7.50).
0 631 12704 6

Howard Davis and Paul Walton worked together in the 1970s on the Glasgow Media Group's *Bad News* and *More Bad News*. They were there concerned with "decoding" the message of TV on industrial affairs, in order to expose what they held to be a marked bias against the trades unions. They have applied the same techniques, in the first essay of the present collection, to the international coverage of Aldo Moro's murder by the Italian Red Brigades in 1978. This time they expose a massive bias in favour of democratic and parliamentary government, as against extra-parliamentary politics, Italian style. If this seems less alarming than the earlier revelations, it must be something to do with consensus. We all have our prejudices, but in this case we nearly all seem to have the same ones. Still, the method of analysing news-output is instructive, if not now new, and much of this collection is devoted to it.

Things seem to have moved on since the days of *Bad News*. Post-structuralism, semiotics, sociolinguistics have all advanced, if not into all universities, at least into the laboratories of Research. In Lord Reith's day, if one had asked, after a news-bulletin, "What does it mean?" the answer would have been that it meant what it said. Even in the 1970s, there would have been a fairly simple answer. Though it did not mean what it said, its message was a straight expression of the ideology of a capitalist middle class, hoping that we would receive it without noticing. We may think of this as the Conspiracy Theory of Meaning. Now it seems there is no conspiracy. What the bulletin means is very much up to us. We have to decode it, even if no one encoded it deliberately. We must "deconstruct" it according to our own cultural ability.

If there are still villains – a capitalist press, or an establishment broadcasting organization – they have a fairly thin time. For often their messages are simply not decoded at all. In an essay entitled "Cultural Transformations", David Morley tells us about the reactions of different groups of working-class people to a videotaped *Nationwide* programme. Each group brought different presuppositions and vocabulary to the task of understanding what they saw. One of the groups, of black students at a college of further education, decoded the programme by saying that it was so boring they didn't see how anyone could bear to watch it: "god that's rubbish", was the nearest they came to deconstruction, the "off" button is after all the most potent form of criticism.

Among the essays in this book one of the simplest and most old-fashioned is on the "reading" of photographs. The relation between photography, painting on the one hand, and the verbal arts on the other, is explored with minimum fuss and considerable insight by Victor Burgin. But absence of fuss is not characteristic of the essays as a whole. On the contrary, there is an overwhelming amount of heavy weather. In the first essay, already mentioned, and in one on News Reporting, by Gunther Kress, differences between different words and sentence-forms are explored with respect to what, back in the 1950s, we used to call "emotive content". No one familiar with the work of Charles Stevenson, nearly forty years ago, will find much here that is new. None the worse, perhaps; we always need to be on the watch for hidden propaganda. But we could perhaps be expected to get the point quite quickly, these days.

Again, Gerhard Leitner, an expert in sociolinguistics, discusses the language of radio with ineffable solemnity. He analyses among other items part of an interview conducted by Jimmy Young, and notices particularly the astonishing mixture of styles. Mr Young both refers to his interlocutor as "a Legal Eagle" *and* calls him "sir" and even "master". How can such things be? One does not need to be familiar with Jimmy Young shows to suspect that Mr Leitner may have missed something here. Has he ever heard of the jokey style (or, more portentously, the ironic)?

In the end, this quite useful kind of criticism may kill itself with pomposity. Trevor Pateman, for example, has some perceptive and interesting things to say about our interpretation of advertisements, a subject not only of interest to advertisers, but of importance to us, the consumers. But he gives his essay the pseudo-Kantian title "How is the Understanding of Advertisements Possible?" And the first paragraph reads like nothing so much as the opening of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, itself a monument to the disasters of runaway verbal inflation. Failure to raise the Kantian question, he says, is a serious "limitation upon the value of the hermeneutics and critique of advertisements that has been produced within broadly structuralist and semiotic paradigms". I dare say. But the disparity between the critical apparatus and the use to which it is put makes the difference between a sledge-hammer and a nut twindle to insignificance.

Still, it is the way things are going. The new critical techniques are being brought to bear on literature of all kinds, even the back of the cornflakes packet. At least we may hope that, when such criticism becomes part of the school curriculum, a less rebarbative language may be found for it.

Reading for a reward

P. J. Kavanagh

BAMBER GASCOIGNE
Quest for the Golden Hare: With the perfect solution submitted by Mike Barker and John Rousseau
224pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 02116 8

Quest for the Golden Hare is an account of the conception, effect and result of a book called *Masquerade*, published in 1979, purportedly for children but here seen to have been almost entirely taken over by adults. In pictures and words the book contained clues that could lead the reader to a buried jewel; a sort of Easter egg-hunt that clearly drove many people to the edge of lunacy and one unfortunate, at least, over the edge.

Masquerade's author is Kit Williams, an eccentric painter who was approached by Jonathan Cape's with an offer to illustrate a children's book. He refused, being a man who fears boredom. The rejected publisher said on leaving, "I still think you could do something no one has ever done before". Mr Williams had no doubt that this was the case, his chief motive in life being the avoidance of repetitiveness, and thought no more about it, except to wonder how anyone could paint the required fifteen connected pictures without boring himself to death – or, as he had always been annoyed by the way that people flip through illustrated books as though they were magazines. Then it came to him. He had to paint some pictures for an exhibition anyway; why not make the connection between them a puzzle, leading the reader elsewhere, and put the clues in the pictures, so the reader would *have* to look at them? From such beautifully simple ideas and motives are hundreds of thousands of pounds made and, in this case, hundreds of thousands of puzzle-obsessed maniacs. Gascoigne gives no final figure of sales, but *Masquerade* had sold 210,000 copies in Britain within three months of publication, 400,000 in the US and, what with foreign editions (including one in Japanese) it is reasonable to guess that more than a million copies must have been eagerly conned for the secret each contained.

It took Williams more than two years to weave his pictures and clues together and Bamber Gascoigne describes the process as entertainingly as possible in the circumstances. It takes him more than sixteen pages to do so. When first it was explained to him (from the outset he was the only person other than Williams privy to the secret), he wondered miserably whether to tell the trustful publishers that the whole thing was impossible. The series of acrostic clues contained in letters arranged round pictures, the relevant letters being indicated by an imaginary line drawn from the figures' eyes and passing through their toes, is further complicated by Williams's squint, which makes it possible for him to look at two things at the same time, as well as by his inability to spell. Gascoigne calls himself a dedicated non-doer of puzzles and his careful explanations of this one do him the more credit.

More distressingly, he gives long quotations from the lives and letters of maddened puzzlers. One wrote Williams more than fifty letters a day, all on the wrong track. One man decided that the clues led to a certain plug in the West Middlesex Drainage Works at Hounslow. "I sat there silent, looking at the plug and thinking that Kit Williams had to be the cleverest and most courageous man in the British Isles." When told he was wrong, he declined further into mental illness.

But perhaps the saddest thing is the way that children were left out. Williams had said that a child of ten could solve the puzzle, but when two professional scientists looked at the book they announced, "We'll be the ones to do this. It needs a couple of physicists." This turned out to be the case; they were the only ones to work it out properly – after two and a half years. Not the ones to find the treasure, however; they were just pipped by a man who, it later transpired, had barely understood the book at all.

Even more embarrassingly (for the publishers had laid on a great deal of TV razzmatazz) he proved to be a man who would only, after much frenzied persuasion, appear on television in disguise, his hat pulled over his eyes, behind a frosted screen, his voice muffled with artificial electronic interference: this proved a publicist's and publishers' nightmare, and by far the funniest episode in the book. Understandably, the suspicions of fellow-Masqueraders were aroused: it looked like a put-up job – perhaps the grotesque, muffled figure was Williams himself? Disturbingly, many still consider their own solutions were the right ones, however far off-beam, and it is difficult not to suspect that in order to quiet such complaints mutterings. He makes a good, heavy job of a depressing tale: "When you created the book, you also created it is the sort of thing some of the lonely contestants say: "Both you and God have created a masterpiece."

Some believed that Williams was communicating directly to them alone. In a television interview he said that he imagined the treasure being dug up by some North Country pigeon-fancier. One treasure-seeker knew that this referred to him: "Are you a pigeon-fancier?" asked the surprised Gascoigne. "No, but whenever I was digging at Farnham there were always a couple of pigeons around." "But you come from the north?" "No, I come from the south, but Kit always rewarded those interested in obsessions, but it makes creepy reading.

The two men met at the University of Strasbourg after the First World War, and discovered that they shared a deep dissatisfaction with the way in which history was studied and taught in France. They thought it too exclusively concerned with the narrative of political events for their own sake. Febvre liked to attack what he called "the idolatry of the fact", "the collection of events as others collect postage stamps and match-boxes", the concern "to discover, if not all the details, then at least as many details as possible about the mission of M. de Charnacé to the courts of the North". What he and Bloch wanted was a problem-oriented history, and also a "broader and more human history", concerned with all human activities. Febvre liked to say that there was no such thing as diplomatic history or the history of philosophy. "Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as economic and social history." There is only history, total history, with compartments. Febvre and Bloch disliked compartmentalization and advocated what would now be called an interdisciplinary approach, arguing that historians needed to study not only geography but also linguistics, sociology and psychology for a better understanding of the past.

This is the context for the history of "collective mentalities" as Bloch and Febvre both practised it. Bloch chose to write the history of the belief in the healing power of touching for the "king's evil". The problem which served as his point of departure was that of accounting for this "collective error", as he called it, of answering the question why people continued to believe in the healing power of the king, although the expected cures must have failed to take place. His answer was that the belief was self-confirming. If the sufferer got better, the king got the credit. If the cure failed to take place, the sufferer went back to try again, in the language of Sir Karl Popper, which is not far distant from the thought of Marc Bloch, belief in the royal touch was not falsifiable. It was not an isolated belief in any case, but associated with a more general faith in miracles. It "formed part of a primitive mentality."

Measures of mentalities

Peter Burke

LUCIEN FEBVRE
The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais
Translated by Beatrice Gottlieb
516pp. Harvard University Press. £28.
0674708253

MARC BLOCH
Les Rois thaumaturges
542pp. Paris: Gallimard. 120fr.
2 07 022704 9

DOMINICK LACAPRA and STEVEN L. KAPLAN (Editors)
Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives
317pp. Cornell University Press. £23.50 (paperback, £12).
0 8014 1470 9

Forty years after its original publication, Lucien Febvre's most important book has at last been translated into English. His junior partner Marc Bloch is much better known in the English-speaking world. Bloch's *Les Rois thaumaturges*, just reissued in France, was published in English as *Royal Touch* in 1973, his *Feudal Society* in 1961, his *Historian's Craft* as far back as 1953. Yet Febvre, venerated – perhaps to excess – in France, remains relatively little known here, although a selection from his numerous essays was published in Britain ten years ago.

Yet Febvre's *Problem of Unbelief* is one of the most seminal works of history published this century, and has inspired a new approach to the past, the history of "collective mentalities", now widely practised in France and attracting increasing attention elsewhere. To be more exact, the approach was also encouraged by some essays by Georges Lefebvre on the French Revolution and by *Royal touch*. However, it is always difficult to discuss either Bloch or Febvre without bringing in the other, so long and intimate was their collaboration.

Febvre's point of departure was rather different from Bloch's, but he arrived at similar conclusions. He was irritated into a concern with Rabelais by coming across the suggestion, in Abel Lefranc's edition of *Pantagruel*, that Rabelais was an unbeliever who wrote in order to undermine Christianity. Febvre was convinced that this interpretation was not only mistaken so far as Rabelais was concerned but also anachronistic, attributing thoughts to the author of *Pantagruel* which were quite unthinkable in the period. This is the reason for the book's rather curious structure, a kind of inverted pyramid.

Febvre's study begins in an extremely precise, philological way. According to Lefranc, the atheism of Rabelais was denounced by a number of his contemporaries, so Febvre goes through these contemporaries, for the most part minor neo-Latin poets of the 1530s, to show, for example, that the verses "On a certain irreligious follower of Lucian" do not refer to Rabelais but to someone quite different, and, more generally, that the term "atheist" did not have its modern precise meaning. It was a smear-word, "used in whatever sense one wanted to give it".

Widening out still further, Febvre goes on to discuss the apparently blasphemous jokes which Rabelais makes in *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, and which Lefranc stressed so much in his arguments for the "rationalism" of those books. Febvre points out that these passages – the "resurrection" of Epistemon, for example – belong to a medieval tradition of parody in which the clergy themselves indulged. According to him, Rabelais was a good Christian of an Erasmian type, a critic of many of the outward forms of the late medieval Church, but a believer in interior religion.

At this point one might have expected the book to come to an end, since the religious credentials of Rabelais had been verified and Lefranc's argument refuted. What Febvre does, however, is to widen out still further, discussing "the limits of unbelief in the sixteenth century". Leaving Rabelais far behind, he now tackles the problem of the possibility of atheism in the sixteenth century, and this brings us back to the history of mentalities as it had been discussed by Marc Bloch in his *Royal Touch*. Febvre argues that the sixteenth century was not intellectually ready for unbelief because of the nature of what he calls the *outillage mental* of the period, its "mental tools", as Beatrice Gottlieb renders it, its intellectual equipment, its conceptual apparatus. Febvre approaches this problem, with characteristic verve, by a sort of *via negativa*, noting the importance of what wasn't there, the "missing words" such as "absolute" and "relative", "abstract" and "concrete", "causality" and "regularity", and many more. "Without them", he asks rhetorically, "how could anyone's thought be given a truly philosophical vigour, solidity and clarity?"

More generally still, Febvre observes that sixteenth-century conceptions of space and time were, by our standards, extremely imprecise. "What year was Rabelais born? He did not know", and there was nothing unusual in that. "Measured time", clock-time, was still less significant than "experienced time", described in terms of sunrise or of the flight of the woodcocks or the length of an Ave Maria. In an intriguing argument – taken up twenty years later by Marshall McLuhan – Febvre even suggests that sight was an "underdeveloped" sense. "There was no Hotel Bellevue in the sixteenth century, nor any Hotel Beau Site. They were not to appear until the age of Romanticism". (Febvre seems unaware of the Florentine Belvedere, or indeed of other examples from Renaissance Italy.) According to him, there was a still more significant absence from the world-view of the period. "No one then had a sense of what was impossible." (I take it that Febvre means there were no generally accepted criteria for what was impossible; one adjective was not one of his "missing words".) As a result, he concludes, what we call "science" was unthinkable in the sixteenth century. "Let us guard against projecting this modern conception of science onto the learning of our ancestors." The conceptual apparatus of the period was too "primitive". There we have it. From a precise and technical discussion of the meaning of the term "atheist" in a handful of sixteenth-century texts, Febvre has been led on to characterize, in bold strokes, the world-view of a whole age.

It has to be admitted that after forty years, the book now seems somewhat dated. The relationship between Rabelais and the traditions of medieval parody has been discussed more fully and with greater insight by Mikhail Bakhtin. On the question of the religion of Rabelais, a more reliable guide is M. A. Screech. Some historians have begun to question Febvre's assumption of the unthinkability of atheism in the sixteenth century, pointing to individuals who seem at least to have denied Providence or professed some form of materialism. Some contemporaries believed that others were atheists in the strict sense; John Donne preached a sermon against those who believed that there was no God.

Yet Febvre's book remains exemplary, for the questions it asks and the methods by which it pursues them rather than for the answers it gives. Together with Bloch's *Royal Touch*, to which it is so closely linked, it has exercised considerable influence on the writing of history, especially in France. Not, curiously enough, on Fernand Braudel, to whom the book was dedicated, "with high hopes", seven years before the publication of *The Mediterranean*. Braudel has always preferred to keep his feet firmly on the ground of "material life". However, the history of mentalities, as it has been practised by Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff, by Robert Mandrou and Jean Delumeau, by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Michel Vovelle, owes a good deal to the examples of Bloch and Febvre.

In following in the footsteps of these two pathfinders, the second-generation historians of mentalities have come to see that their predecessors sometimes went astray. There are two obvious weaknesses in the Bloch-Febvre approach. The first is that they tended to treat French culture as if it were essentially homogeneous, writing about the attitudes of "the medieval Frenchman", "the sixteenth-century Frenchman", "a century that wanted to believe", and so on, rather than looking for variations of attitude between (or indeed within) social groups. They emphasized the self-confirming nature of certain beliefs in order to explain their persistence, but they explained the persistence so successfully that it is hard for the reader to understand why change eventually occurred. After all, Descartes was born in Febvre's sixteenth-century France. Bloch and Febvre did not raise the question, which now seems obvious, of the relationship between mentality and ideology. They did not discuss whether it was in the interest of some groups that other groups should believe in the efficacy of the royal touch or in other miracles. In this respect, Duby's recent study of the image of the "three orders" in the Middle Ages is considerably more sophisticated.

The second weakness in the first-generation history of mentalities is still more serious. It centres on the question of the so-called "primitive" nature of medieval or sixteenth-century attitudes. Febvre in particular was dependent on what he called the "wonderful books" of Lévy-Bruhl for his notion of primitive mentality. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was a philosopher whose place in the development of twentieth-century thought would well deserve further study. A disciple of Durkheim, his books on "primitive mentality" (a phrase he helped to launch), were read with excitement by scholars as diverse as Ernst Cassirer, Johan Huizinga and Jane Harrison, as well as by Febvre and Bloch. It was Lévy-Bruhl who defined primitive mentality as "pre-logical", in the sense of indifferent to contradiction, and lacking a sense of the impossible. "For the primitive mind", he wrote, "everything is a miracle, or rather nothing is: and therefore everything is credible, and there is nothing either impossible or absurd." All Febvre did was to transpose this observation to the sixteenth century. The trouble is that at the end of his life, Lévy-Bruhl changed his mind on this question, and came to deny this fundamental distinction between the primitive and the civilized mentalities. In any case, this distinction which, with its evolutionist assumptions, now seems dated as well as ethnocentric, has been abandoned by the specialists in the so-called "primitives" – the social anthropologists.

The history of mentalities does not stand or fall with Lévy-Bruhl and his concept of the "pre-logical". It might, for example, be possible to replace the distinction between logical and pre-logical with that between "operatory" and "pre-operatory" thought made in C. R. Hallpike's *Foundations of Primitive Thought*, which is based on the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget. (It is a pity, incidentally, that Febvre, who was extremely interested in psychology, seems not to have known of Piaget's work.) What should be clear is that one cannot simply plod along in the footsteps of Bloch and Febvre as if nothing had happened, or dismiss the debates, as Febvre did, in a somewhat cavalier manner, as "matters for philosophers" which did not concern him. In that sense there is a crisis in the history of mentalities, as it is currently practised in France, and a need to rethink the approach.

Curiously enough, this is the very conclusion which Dominick LaCapra and his colleagues reached about their discipline, intellectual history, at a conference held at Cornell University in 1980, concerned with the relationship between history and "Critical Theory, hermeneutics, structuralism and post-structuralism". From this conference there has emerged a somewhat uneven collection of a dozen essays under the title *Modern European Intellectual History*.

Some of the contributions are first-rate. Keith Baker's, for example, which argues that intellectual history is best seen not as a separate field but as a concern with the meaning of social action (as Febvre would have said, "there is no such thing as intellectual history"). Baker exemplifies this conception by examining the emergence of a new political culture in mid-eighteenth-century France. In a characteristically penetrating and negative piece (not always correctly translated), Roger Chartier suggests that some of the basic categories of intellectual historians, such as the distinctions between learned and popular culture, intellectual production and consumption, literary texts and documents, need to be called into question. He does not say what should take their place. Peter Jelavich in fact builds his perceptive account of the theatre in *fin-de-siècle* Munich around one of the distinctions which Chartier rejects, writing of the modernists as appropriating popular culture in order to subvert or reform élite culture.

These three essays, which deserve to be read by everyone interested in intellectual history, are not written in ignorance of current debates over "Critical Theory, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-structuralism", etc, but they owe relatively little to them. On the other hand, the essays which do engage with these debates (Martin Jay on Havermas and Gadamer, Mark Poster on Foucault, E. M. Henning on Derrida, and so on), while interesting enough as accounts of contemporary authors, do not really come to grips with their relevance to intellectual history. The promised "new perspectives" remain blurred. One closes the volume with a sense of opportunity missed, and of the need for a new Lucien Febvre, who not only wrote about new ideas but put them to work to solve concrete historical problems.

Two poems by Tony Harrison

Cypress & Cedar

A smell comes off my pencil as I write
in the margins of a sacred Sanskrit text.
By just sufficient candlelight I skim
these scriptures sceptically from hymn to hymn.
The bits I read aloud to you I've Xed
for the little clues they offer to life's light.

I sit in mine, and you sit in your chair.
A sweetness hangs round yours; a foul smell mine.
Though the house still has no windows and no doors
and the tin roof's roughly propped with 4 x 4s
that any gale could jolt, our chairs are fine
and both scents battle for the same night air.

Near Chiefland just off US 129,
from the clapboard abbatoir about a mile,
the local sawyer Bob displays his wares:
porch swings, picnic tables, lounging chairs,
rough sawn and nailed together 'cracker' style.
The hand I shake *leaves powerful smells on mine.*

Beside two piles of shavings, white and red,
one fragrant as a perfume, and one rank
and malodorous from its swampland ooze,
Bob displayed that week's work's chairs for me to choose.
I chose one that was sweet, and one that stank,
and thought about the sweet wood for a bed.

To quote the carpenter he 'stinks o' shite'
and his wife won't sleep with him on cypress days,
but after a day of cedar, so he said,
she comes back eagerly into his bed,
and, as long as he works cedar, there she stays.
Sometimes he scorns the red wood and works white!

Today I've laboured with my hands for hours
sawing fenceposts up for winter; one tough knot
jolted the chainsaw at my face and sprayed
a beetroot cedar dust off the bucked blade,
along with damp earth with its smell of rot,
hurtling beetles, termites in shocked showers.

To get one gatepost free I had to tug
for half an hour, but dragged up from its hole
it smelled, down even to the last four feet
rammed in the ground, still beautifully sweet
as if the grave had given life parole
and left the sour earth perfumed where I'd dug.

Bob gave me a cedar buckle for my belt,
and after the whole day cutting, stacking wood,
damp denim, genitals, 'genuine hide leather'
all these fragrances were bound together
by cedar, and together they smelled good.
It was wonderful the way my trousers smelled.

I can't help but suppose flesh-famished Phèdre
would have swept that prissy, epicene,
big-game hunting stepson Hippolyte,
led by his nose to cedar, off his feet,
and left no play at all for poor Racine,
if she'd soaped her breasts with *Bois de Cèdre.*

If in doubt ask Bob the sawyer's wife!
Pet lovers who can't stand the stink of cat
buy sacks of litter that's been 'cedarized'
and from ancient times the odour's been much prized.
Though not a Pharoah I too favour that
for freighting my rank remains out of this life.

Why not two cedar chairs? Why go and buy
a reeking cypress chair as a reminder,
as if one's needed, of primeval ooze,
like swamps near Suwannee backroads, or bayous,
stagnation Mother Nature left behind her
hauling Mankind up from mononuclei?

Cypress still has roots in that old stew
paddling its origins in protozoa,
the stew where consciousness that writes and reads
grew its first squat tail from slimy seeds.
I'd've used it for the Ark if I'd been Noah,
though cedar, I know you'll say, would also do.

This place not in the *Blue Guide* or in *Fodor*
between the Suwannee River and the Styx
named by some homesick English classicist
who loved such puns, loathed swamps, and, lonely, pissed
his livelihood away with redneck hicks
and never once enjoyed the cedar's odour,

or put its smoke to snake-deterrent use
prescribed by Virgil in his *Georgics* III
with *chelydrus* here in the US South
construed as the diamondback or cottonmouth
which freed him, some said, from his misery.
Others said liquor, and others still a noose.

And, evenings, he who'd been an avid reader
of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* in Greek,
became an even avider verandah drinker
believing sourmash made a Stoic thinker
though stuck with no paddle up Phlegethon's creek
and had no wife with a clothes chest of sweet cedar.

But you bought one at Bob's place and you keep
your cotton frocks in it, your underwear,
and such a fragrance comes from your doffed bras
as come from uncorked phials in hot bazaars,
and when you take your clothes off and lie bare
your body breathes out cedar while you sleep.

That lonely English exile named the river,
though it could have been someone like me, for whom,
though most evenings on the porch I read and write,
there's often such uneasiness in night
it creates despair in me, or drinker's gloom
that could send later twinges through the liver.

Tonight so far's been peaceful with no lightning.
The pecan trees and hophornbeams are still.
The storm's held off, the candleflame's quite straight,
the fire and wick united in one fate.
Though this quietness that can, one moment, fill
the heart with peace, can, the next, be frightening–

A hog *gets gelded with a gruesome squeal*
that skids across the quietness of night
to where we're sitting on your dodgy porch.
I reach for Seth Tooke's shotgun and the torch
then realise its 'farmwork' so alright
but my flesh also flinches from the steel.

Peace like a lily pad on swamps of pain–
floating's its only way of being linked.
This consciousness of ours that reads and writes
drifts on a darkness deeper than the night's.
Above that blackness, buoyed on the extinct,
peace, pure-white, floats flowering in the brain,

and fades, as finally the nenuphar
we found on a pewter swamp where *two roads ended*
was also bound to fade. The head and heart
are neither of them too much good apart
and pence comes in the moments that they're blended
as cypress and cedar at this moment are.

My love, as prone as I am to despair,
I think the world of night's best born in pairs,
one half we'll call the female, one the male,
though neither essence need, in love, prevail.
We sit here in distinctly scented chairs
you, love, in the cedar, me the cypress chair.

Though tomorrow night I might well sit in yours
and you in mine, the blended scent's the same
since I pushed my chair close to your chair
and we read by the one calm candle that we share
in this wilderness that might take years to tame,
this house still with no windows and no doors.

Let the candle cliché come out of the chill–
'the flickering candle on a vast dark plain'
of one lone voice against the state machine,
or Mimi's on cold stairs aren't what I mean
but moments like this now when heart and brain
seem one sole flame that's bright and straight *and still.*

If it's in Levy County that I die
(though fearing I'd feel homesick as I died
I'd sooner crash in Yorkshire if I could)
I'll have my coffin made of cedar wood
to balance the smell like cypress from inside
and hope the smoke of both blends in the sky,

as both scents from our porch chairs do tonight.
"Tvashti", says this Indian Rig Veda,
"hewed the world out of one tree", but doesn't tell,
since for durability both do as well,
if the world he made was cypress wood; or cedar
the smell coming off my pencil as I write.

The Red Lights of Plenty

on the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, died London March 14, 1883

. . . et asperi
Martis sanguineas quae cohibet manus,
quae dat belligeris foedera gentibus
et coniu retinet divite copiam.

[Seneca, Medea 62–65]

[illegible] all beings
[illegible] falling from her horn
the Old World's edible, the feedbins' porn
next to the Law Court's Fallout Shelter sign
the blacks and oranges of Halloween.
All that motherly bounty turned to stone!
She chokes back tears of dribbling gasoline
for the future fates of countries like my own.

I stroll round Washington: November strews
red welcomes on the pavements from the trees
on Constitution and Independence Avenues
as if the least pedestrians were VIPs
or returning warlords lured inside to back,
their lifeblood gushing out this hue of Fall
bulldozed by Buick and by Cadillac
to side drains too choked up to take it all.

Through two museums, *Science* and *Indian Arts*
something from deep below the car-choked street,
like thousands of Poe's buried tell-tale hearts
pounds with a base and undissembled beat.
With NASA decals, necklaces by Navajo,
Japanese in groups come out to stare
[illegible] Sunday's [illegible]

The American Wrecking Co.'s
repeatedly rammed iron wrecking ball
swinging in arcs of rhythmic ease and fros
against a scarcely-50-year-old, well-built wall
cracks cement from criss-cross steel supports,
and, floor by floor, once guaranteed to last
till time needs more museums, Justice Courts,
and enterprises space, collapses to the past.

A red light flashes many times a minute
on the Population Clock here in D.C.
to show the billions the World has in it
including those police, that black youth, me,
and, three years ago today, reached 4.5!
Each line of verse how many people born?
How many of these children will survive
crushed through the narrow end of PLENTY's horn?

And one red light for punished and for pitied
the FBI displays next to the time
flashes on whenever there's committed
somewhere in the States a serious crime,
as I imagine that it flashed on when the youth
I saw handcuffed and then screeched away
to monuments of Justice, Order, Truth,
committed his, but what it was I couldn't say.

An All Souls' pumpkin rots on someone's porch.
It could be PLENTY's head, about to die,
her cornucopia a guttering torch
still hot enough to scorch the whole Earth dry.
This pumpkin lantern's gouged eyes glued
against some unbelievably bright glare
can't see, *as I do, that young black pursued*
then caught, the red lights hacking darkening air.

Leaves, some like menses, some volcanic hues,
whirl on successive wafts of hot CO
as Constitution and Independence Avenues
boom to the ball and chain's destructive blow
and, against Virginia, on Capital and Law
each sunset-reddened window one degree
of vast thermometers that, floor by floor,
chart our fever up to World War Three.

In a poem this long how many new souls born?
How many pendulum swings of wreckers' ball
that throbs beneath the White House on whose lawn
a giant vacuum's Hoovering the Fall?

Behind the acts

Galen Strawson

AHDAF SOUEIF
Aisha
159pp. Cape. £7.50.
0 224 02097 8

Sometimes it seems right to adopt a simple *distinction* and to say that a work of fiction does not succeed, because it remains too much on the surface of material things and observable actions; it fails to describe the motives and emotions that underlie the acts. (Of course to remain on the surface in this way is not always a failure; it can be an achievement in the art of understatement, a careful literary design, a successful austerity.) Modern Egyptian literature, however – the tradition within which Taha Hussein, the author of *The Days*, has a crucial founding influence and of which Naguib Mahfouz is perhaps presently the doyen – often appears to abolish *this distinction between the surface of* happenstance and the underlying motives and emotions; it does so by bringing the emotions to the surface, leaving a curious and powerfully blank region beneath; a region unbroached by explanatory psychological investigation. The emotions are brought to the surface as phenomena, in the sense that they are plainly stated in straightforward, rather formal terms – there is happiness, sadness, jealousy, anger, joy and sorrow – and are given exactly the same sort of status as material things, times, places, and suchlike. Here is a table, here is an act, here is an emotion. *Here is another emotion,* and here a consequent action. And soon.

This is a broad generalization, but it seems true to say that there is in Egyptian literature little of the relentlessly delicate, applied, psychological wile that we tend to expect in serious Western fiction. Deeper emotional complexity is *implied, not mapped.* The psyche as such is not examined and paraded. It is speechless; not to be anatomized. It remains a powerfully present unknown, something of which one is made continually aware, precisely because it is not discussed.

Although it is written in English, Ahdaf Soueif's *Aisha* clearly belongs in the modern Egyptian literary tradition and shows to advantage many of its general traits. But it is not a novel – it has no story, and no heroine. Instead it is eight stories, four of which are about Aisha. (She appears in three of the other four as well, but these appearances are gratuitous, and in one case – "The Apprentice", a story about a young boy employed at a hairdresser's shop who derives violent sexual pleasure from washing women's hair – slightly distracting.)

One feels that Soueif is conscious of the Egyptian – or, generally, Arab – tradition. A specific foreignness is nicely introduced into the stories by the occasional literal rendering of Arab idioms: "What bent luck!", one character exclaims; "Nobody fills her eye" (pleases or delights her), says another; reciting the opening chapter of the Qur'an from memory, Aisha is *said to "read" it (the stronger sense of* the verb *qara'a* oddly displacing the weaker). And one of the stories, "The Wedding of Zeina" directly echoes in its title that of the Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih's novella *The Wedding of Zein.* In it Dada Zeina, Aisha's nanny, tells of how she was married: after complete depilation (only the hair on her head is left), Zeina is delivered to her bridegroom for a test of her virginity. He thrusts his bandaged middle finger into her, "working it round and round and in out", finally withdrawing it, satisfactorily bloodstained. "My uncle wound [the bandage] round his head, *blood and all, and danced slowly* and proudly into the crowd, using his gun like a cane to dance with and calling out, 'Our Honour, Our daughter's Honour, Our family's Honour'."

In "Her Man", a sequel to "The Wedding to Zeina", Zeina, now a wife – a first wife – of ten years standing, finds a way to get rid of her husband's second, much younger wife. Once again the story has a peculiarly Egyptian quality: strong surface emotions expressed in almost ritual language, even in the inner monologues of the characters; great seriousness; and maintenance of complete silence about the subtler, darker reaches of the mind.

The two stories that are either wholly or partly about Aisha in England – "1964 and "Knowing" – are rather different, however. "1964" in particular – in which Aisha attends a south London comprehensive in the year after the Beatles' first LP – is illuminated by a wit and dexterity of expression that place it in marked contrast with the other stories, and lead one to think that the Arab or Egyptian literary manner to some extent imposes itself with the Egyptian subject matter; and that Soueif's commitment to it is at present at least partly involuntary, however conscious it may also be. This in turn prompts a further thought: that although the strongest stories in this collection are in fact those that are most Egyptian in manner – and these rank with the best of their kind – Ahdaf Soueif's particular gift may attain its fullest expression when she succeeds in combining the style that her English experience elicits with the peculiarly Arab or Egyptian literary style of which she is already so accomplished a practitioner.

Cheery but eerie

Peter Kemp

STEPHEN BENATAR
When I Was Otherwise
270pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.
0 370 30531 0

Stephen Benatar's *When I Was Otherwise* is a lively novel that begins with the discovery of two corpses. Its first chapter reports the coming to light of a macabre ménage in Hendon – where a home help, on gaining entry to a slum-like semi, finds one old woman newly dead, and the remains of another who died a year or so earlier; the surviving member of the household, an elderly widower, refuses to offer any explanation. For the rest of the novel – moving backwards and forwards across the decades – Stephen Benatar does this for him, retracing the devious ways that have led to this grisly juncture.

Skilfully following the wandering thought-processes of the aged – the *way their minds can abruptly stumble* into the past – he uncovers what lies behind the increasingly shaky co-existence of a brother, sister and sister-in-law in their suburban home, Shangri-La. After briefly describing the final years of the three old people, the novel moves back to plump out their personalities and pasts. The most substantially fleshed out is the one who ends as a skeleton in a bedroom – domineering Daisy, robustly bursting with egotism and appetite for life. Her exuberant ploys and foibles are lavishly chronicled. Attentively, Benatar shows how the atrocious and the admirable are wedged inseparably *together in the character behind her* theatrically jaunty facade.

At once chivvied and cheered up by her, Dan and Marsha, Daisy's in-laws, are less powerful personalities. Dan, in fact, though the survivor, never really comes to life, remaining a dummy-like model of decency. Benatar – as his earlier novel, *Wish Her Safe At Home,* displayed, – is an author who is markedly more interested in portraying women than men. And Marsha, ultimately goaded out of fluffy playfulness into creepy attack, offers a sharp instance of something that clearly fascinates him: latent female fierceness. Like Rachel, the central figure *in Benatar's previous book,* Marsha has for decades led a life devoid of intimacy. As with Rachel, too, starved needs eventually impel her into feverish self-assertion. In each case, Benatar is particularly concerned to show how sentimentality can sour into psychosis. Middle-brow manifestations of cloying romanticism are high among his fictional preoccupations. Chat about escapist books and films, snatches of mawkish songs echo cheerily and eerily through his novels. Always in her element in the rose-tinted realm they represent, Marsha slowly withdraws through make-believe into total delusion. Graduating from the sickly to the sickening, it is she who turns Shangri-La, with its increasingly ironic-seeming name, into a kind of cosy charnel-house, barricaded against reality and the rest of the world.

As with *Wish Her Safe At Home, When I Was Otherwise* depicts a dream-home turning into a nightmare *within which a woman is crazily* trapped. And similarities between these books are so very close as to suggest that Benatar's imagination may also be in danger of becoming housebound, obsessively limited to the same fictional territory. Both novels begin with an item noticed in a newspaper. Both contain a woman whose life has been seriously impaired by the behaviour of a selfish mother. Both watch someone teetering through disorientated domesticity into dementia. In each, a reclusive old woman locks herself in a mouldering house with a decaying corpse. In each, a personality is doubly rotted by sugary sentimentality and soured frustration. Both books conclude with a Grand Guignol welter of horror and hallucination.

Paradoxically, however, despite Benatar's enthusiasm for covering the same ground, the scenes where he does so in *When I Was Otherwise* comprise the novel's most listless and perfunctory pages. His writing freshens perceptibly when it escapes from the fusty purlieus of the Hendon home, and back into his characters' earlier lives. Here, there is an energy and conviction lacking from the final scenes. The novel's closing episodes are stultified by melodrama. Obviously envisaged as the strongest moments in the book, they are actually its weakest: with Marsha's madness – at once too sudden and too contrived – never carrying sufficient power to be really shocking. Where *When I Was Otherwise* does generate tremors, in fact, is in its treatment, not of unnatural breakdown, but of natural decline. The book slightly resembles Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* in that it records how two women, after leading very different lives, are brought together – part-aptly and part-incongruously – to share their final days. Reflecting with satisfaction on his novel's ability to give an authentic sense of the passage of time, Bennett once observed complacently that "It isn't in many books that you can see people growing old". Much to its credit, *When I Was Otherwise* is such a book. And it is in its realistic chronicling of unavoidable decay, rather than in its stagy scenes of arbitrary collapse, that its genuine *frissons* lie.

A feminist issue

Jill Neville

CONSUELO BAEHR
Nothing to Lose
218pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0 575 03293 6

"Pining away and dying" was probably anorexia nervosa; but there has never been a romantic term for fatness. The unambiguous word "greed" can be *called a compulsion to eat, or even the* new euphemism "bulimia" – almost as handy an expression as dyslexia or developing countries. Of the seven deadly sins, Greed is surely the most comical and the lowest, except perhaps for Envy, to which it is often akin. But this is the 1980s and America, and the *assumption is that Consuelo Baehr's* fat heroine, April, guzzles so much because her parents didn't love her. She can hardly be expected to find solace in Nature or the quality of life in New York City.

The most interesting aspect of this entertaining if somewhat fraudulent novel is the description of April's terror of becoming involved with other people and of the inevitable pain. Her first marriage reaches Rabelaisian depths when she farts thunderously while her husband is flirting in the next room: "She was sure Harald had heard it. They probably heard it in the next apartment. They probably heard it across the river in Hoboken." Thrown out by her husband, she quakes inside her layers of blubber and looks forward to evenings alone with a gargantuan sandwich. One scene achieves a genuinely dream-like quality: April is drifting about the shops in a shabby raincoat, wearing sneakers without socks, and is picked up by a man wearing the most expensive watch in the world, who takes her to bed, and gazes at her gigantic thighs in delight.

Enter the fairy godmother in the form of Don the homosexual, who works in the Department Store where she has wangled herself a job as a copywriter. Don takes April in hand is the true hero of the book. "Imagine a thin little thing stepping out of you. Oh, I can't bear it. Be still my heart. You'd be gorgeous." Soon he's got her exercising on the roof, watching her diet, reporting progress.

'Now tell me', he said, 'when you relax your forehead, eyelids and mouth, how do you feel about yourself?'

'Satisfied.'

'Precisely, you're satisfied which translates into exciting.'

By now we're in Gurley-girlie country and the rage for self-improvement; it's basic Mills and Boon, Mr Right comes along, stern, unapproachable, the President of the Company, shortly to be available.

It is all very post-feminist, with a joke or two about feminism along the way. Playing hard to get, April changes jobs and works happily with a bluff bottom-patter, " 'You ever hear of sexual harassment, buddy?' she'd ask in a menacing voice. 'You want sexual harassment', he would throw her on his couch. 'I'll show you sexual harassment.' She liked him and he liked her."

In spite of the romantic lie at the centre of the book and the endless *descriptions* of clothes and objects that read like a hymn to the golden calf, *Nothing to Lose* is fun to read. Part, pity and very New York; full of the admirable offhand observations of an unfooled eye.

Writers at Work: Fifth Series (387pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 008618 4) contains interviews from *The Paris Review* with Kingsley Amis, John Cheever, Henry Green, P. G. Wodehouse and others.

On the track

Colin Greenland

M. JOHN HARRISON
The Ice Monkey: and other stories
144pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0 575 03259 6

Nothing underfoot escapes M. John Harrison's eye: dark moorland heather "mottled with the brighter green of the new bilberry shoots", or, in some industrial *hinterland,* "the vacant cinders of a transport café car park, puddled and luminous". No writer has ever paid so much attention to the ground, scouring the frozen clay of demolished terraces and the screes of Wastwater, pacing the shingle of Southend and "the carnivorous bends of the A82". Every footstep is precise, every trace is noted. Harrison is on the track of something.

It is all directed into the narrative, his scrutiny of shabby carpets "glazed with ancient grease", or convolvulus "spilling like white of egg out of a rusty old can". This is not the sort of writing that ravishes detail on the senses while cheating the sensibility. Harrison's particularity is purposeful. There is something which these anxious characters would seize upon, and pin down: an elusive conclusion, a fatal epiphany, a spirit of disembodied violence waiting for its incalling. In "Egnaro", a depressed second-hand bookseller is haunted by the prospect of a secret country, its existence deduced from certain typographical errors and half-heard conversations. Egnaro is the undiscovered land, the tropical Eden of popular romance. There at last will be the answer, to which the everyday world provides such a fragmentary and disappointing litter of clues. *Meanwhile among these* clues – the fossil footprints, the urban detritus – tread successive uncertain narrators, all looking apprehensively about them.

Everywhere, meaning threatens. A broken pendant, a little silver monkey, the talisman of an exhausted marriage. A handicapped couple, one blind, one paraplegic, form a composite organism with its own desperate vitality. A deserted building-site in Bow opens out "the floor plan of the slums to come". As the macabre Dr Alexandre explains, "Matter is cheap in the universe. It is disorganised, but yearns to be of use." The revelation may be sordid or it may be beautiful; it will not catch the narrator unaware, or unprepared. With his "compact but powerful torch, a flask of hot tea," and "field-glasses of a remarkable resolution purchased in Dortmund" he is not, whatever he likes to pretend, an innocent observer. He is deeply involved in the awful affair, whatever it is, complicit in a grim, but unacknowledged pact with the one who has the cunning, or the moral courage, or the sheer demonic compulsion to invoke the apocalypse. They are in it together, like torturer and victim, charlatan and dupe. Here, after it is all over, the survivor shows us around the crater, limping slightly, and speaking in tones of self-reproach: "God knows why we do these things to ourselves." But God, as in the bizarre and sly "Settling the World", may be a giant beetle from the dark side of the Moon. God only knows what He's interested in. Our revelations and recriminations are our own responsibility.

Harrison's imagination is merciless. His fiction is a scalpel slicing through the skin of the world to make dissections both strange and disturbingly familiar. This collection puts him in the company of Ian McEwan and Peter Carey, but he is grittier than Carey, and wittier than McEwan. His style, as ever, is his own.

commentary

Not the riglar drama

H. R. Woudhuysen

PHILIP MASSINGER
A New Way to Pay Old Debts
The Other Place, Statford-upon-Avon

"A silly play. The plot but ordinary . . . for the lines they are very poore, noe expressions, but onely plaine downright relating the matter; without any new dress either of language or fancy": Abraham Wright's judgment of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* in about 1640 may seem rather harsh (he read no further than Act 3), but despite its comparative popularity Massinger's play is not immediately attractive. It offers one really outstanding part, that of Sir Giles Overreach, which Edmund Kean played, according to Byron and Hazlitt, with quite astonishing power and brilliance. For the rest we are in a world of cardboard prodigals, righteous widows, pompous lords, romantic lovers, and a host of unlikely lawyers, JPs, cooks, innkeepers and servants. The play comes to life only in the long last act, when Sir Giles is himself overreached and driven into a terrifying and passionate frenzy.

Adrian Noble's straightforward production at The Other Place betrays a certain lack of confidence in the play and his own ideas about it. While his set is a dusty grey the characters and their costumes are either black or white. The main exception to this is the seedy-looking and unlovable Lord Lovell of Lewis Jones, who is dressed in a rich grey suit complete with broad-brimmed hat, moustache and pearl ear-ring. He appears to come out of the Royalist side of the English Civil War – "1642" is chalked in huge figures on the floor of the stage. But Overreach belongs to the late eighteenth century and the contrast between Lovell's rural, aristocratic values and his bourgeois, metropolitan ones is lost in this clash of periods.

Equally, what we are meant to make of the characters never quite emerges: are we to take Welborne as an unfortunate gentleman fallen on hard times, or a reprehensible rake who has needed the services of a surgeon? Can we really believe in Lovell's marrying the beautiful widow Lady Alworth? Is Greedy (played engagingly by a feebly thin John Carter), to be condemned as a dreadful glutton or admired for his obsession with food and eating as the spirit of festive comedy? Most puzzlingly of all, while Overreach is clearly a despicable villain why is it so difficult to hate him? In spite of some confident and accomplished performances the production remains uncertain of and uneasy about its own direction.

At times it seems that Emrys James's Overreach has been conceived of as another attempt to portray Edmund Kean and tie down the impossibilities and contradictions of the great romantic actor in one of his most successful roles. While in a fine performance James does his best to convey this, most of the production's impetus appears to come from a different source and to draw on the spirit and formula of the RSC's version of *Nicholas Nickleby*. Colin Sell's lively and highly visible band helps make up for the "very poore" language of the play, and a constant jokiness and frenetic energy disguise the plot's wooden structure. It begins with a bang as Welborne is thrown out of his Nottinghamshire inn by the Squeers-like Tapwell of Timothy Kightley and his ghastly Fanny Squeers of a wife, Froth. Throughout the evening amid heroic fights, crazy chases and wild acrobatics parallels keep emerging with Dickens's novel: principally of Overreach as Ralph Nickleby trying to marry off his bejewelled and rouged, but innocent, daughter to gain power and money; but also of Overreach as Ralph robbing his nephew Welborne of his rightful inheritance. The cruel extortioner is aided by an unredeemed Newman Noggs called Marrall – a sinister and treacherous clerk who cheats his master, but is also then rejected as a rascal by the virtuous at the play's end.

A New Way to Pay Old Debts, so popular in the 1820s and 1830s, might have been exactly the right sort of play (suitably altered and retouched) for Vincent Crummles and his company. While in the middle of writing *Nicholas Nickleby* Dickens seems deliberately to have avoided going to see the play, partly perhaps because of his dislike of the younger Kean's rivalry with his friend Macready. "I meant to have gone to the theatre to-night," he wrote to his wife on March 5, 1839, "but I thought better of it when I found Charles Kean was doing Sir Giles Overreach and so stopped by the fireside, reading a book of celebrated trials for High Treason which I bought to-day." At the same time he told John Forster: "If it had been the 'riglar' drama I should have gone, but I was afraid Sir Giles Overeach (are there two r's?) might upset me so I stayed away."

It is tempting to speculate that Dickens's tenderness about going to see Massinger's play may have been related to a recognition of its closeness in parts to the novel he had in hand. Adrian Noble's production suggests some striking possible parallels between the two works – it is a pity he did not make more of them.

Desperate Dan and the school friend

J. S. Bratton

Penny Dreadfuls and Comics: English periodicals for children from Victorian times to the present day.
Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

One of the joys of modern museums is that they legitimize the fascination of the trivial, providing an excuse to take seriously things of which one's parents and teachers disapproved. We may gawp unreproved at medieval torture-chambers and Victorian underwear, and approach thrillingly close to the superannuated steam-trains. The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood is a very good place to find such pleasures, and their current loan exhibition of English periodicals for children is a treat as good as a whole bag of bubble-gum for the unregenerate urchin in us.

The most remarkable feature of the exhibition is the wealth of the cheapest and most ephemeral publications which is on show. Such material rarely survives its readers, and these periodicals are important to the student of modern culture, for over a period of 150 years they are the only stories and images that we can be sure were absorbed by a large section of readers, the newly and the barely literate. Assessment of the imaginative impact of the nineteenth-century boom in literacy is greatly hampered by the fact that books were bought for, rather than by, the child reader; only the comics, initially costing a penny or less and regularly shared by nine or ten readers, are direct evidence about their own choice of fiction. The physical appearance of the early periodicals in this exhibition underlines the essential difference between the bloods and comics, presented in singel numbers or cheap cardboard covers, and the wholesome periodicals which were set up to rival them, all on display in handsome clothbound annuals, obviously designed as avuncular gifts, or even school rewards.

The impression one gains from the succession of luridly-coloured fronts on show is complex. There are links with other popular images, not only since *Radio Fun* and TV spin-offs, but among the earliest examples: one of the first cases juxtaposes a big poster for a story-paper showing a boy sailor carrying a gun with a set of out-of-date theatrical prints given away with a *Boys of England* penny-part novel in 1877; the boy hero is striking the same pose as the heroic figures played by T. P. Cooke and Gomersal fifty years before. But as well as such links across the popular tradition, there is a discernible thread of continuity in the papers themselves. They are on the one hand violent, deliberately "shocking", polarizing good and evil according to crude stereotypes; and on the other fantastical and imaginative, rejecting rational restrictions. The same simian face belongs to Sweeney Todd in 1878 and war-comic Nazis a hundred years later; the fantasy of limitless machine power fuels electrical birds and steam horses in 1890s dime novels and innumerable spaceships and bike mags today; and of course in the comics Desperate Dan and Dennis the Menace act out ritual fantasies of violence.

In so rich a field there are inevitably omissions, even in a large exhibition: nevertheless, two criticisms seem to me justified. There is no coherent display of girls' papers. The Billy Bunter case contains a couple of pre-war issues of *School Friend* and one of *Girl's Cinema*, unexplained, there chiefly because they were also published by Amalgamated Press. The one case devoted to girls' comics confusingly seems to suggest that *School Friend* was first published in 1950, and offers a very meagre selection of the *Roxy*, *Romeo* and *Valentine* that passed under the desks in my school; no copy of *Girl's Crystal*, from the previous generation, no *Red Letter* or *Red Star*. One is reminded of the accusation of Angela McRobbie that cultural studies are often a way for male sociologists to participate covertly in subcultural homages to masculinity. This bias does not devalue what is here; but a failure of labelling does blur the impact of one of the most interesting sections, the history of the "comic" paper. All the labelling is deliberately sparing, and in the penny dreadful and story-paper cases the material does speak for itself; but when we reach *Ally Sloper* and *Comic Cuts* it should be made clear that we are now looking at material not initially intended for children, which extended its readership down the age range. In fact many of these papers, from *Jack Harkaway* to *The Beano*, belong to a subcultural set not definable by age. Its typical representative is thought of as a young adolescent, and much of the material here seems to represent the typology of male puberal fantasy. It should not be forgotten, however, that the reader of periodicals of this kind is nevertheless more often a girl than a boy, and quite likely to be an adult, who reads little else. Despite these reservations, the exhibition is decidedly to be relished.

"A white glimmer showed ahead; a cold light gleamed white upon the dripping side of the tunnel. A moment later the astonished signalman in the box at the mouth of the tunnel saw the horse and rider dash forth from the black entry, with the locomotive of the oncoming train literally at their heels." An illustration to the serial Paddy Leary's Schooldays *by T. C. Bridges in the* Boys' Realm, *1903, from the exhibition reviewed here.*

Author, Author

Competition No 130
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than July 29. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most [illegible] correct, in which case inspired [illegible] will be [illegible] Author, Author, [illegible] Twelve, I'm thirteen. No. The chap in the machinery. Where the deuce did he pop out of? He wasn't in the chapel, that I'll swear. Silly superstition that about thirteen.

James Joyce, *Ulysses*.

2 My morning coat, my collar mounting
Firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but
Asserted by a simple pin –

T. S. Eliot, "The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".

3 – I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying –
To make you hear. Your ears are soft
and small
And listen to an old man not at all,
They want the young men's whispering
and sighing.

John Crowe Ransom, "Piazza Piece".

Competition No 126
Winner, Sharon Pogferman, [illegible] Answers

1 [illegible] stood far back, his hat in his hand, counting the bared heads, "Twelve, I'm thirteen. No. The chap in the machinery. Where the deuce did he pop out of? He wasn't in the chapel, that I'll swear. Silly superstition that about thirteen.

James Joyce, *Ulysses*.

2 My morning coat, my collar mounting
Firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but
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T. S. Eliot, "The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".

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To make you hear. Your ears are soft
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And listen to an old man not at all,
They want the young men's whispering
and sighing.

John Crowe Ransom, "Piazza Piece".

Unspontaneous combustion

Ronald Hayman

THOMAS BABE
Buried Inside Extra
Royal Court Theatre

Watching an all-American cast in the theatre is quite different from watching one in a film, and though *Buried Inside Extra* is an extremely flawed play, tremendous energy is intermittently generated by Joseph Papp's high-octane actors. Unlike English actors, they seem most at ease when being mpst fiercely vituperative, and some sequences of this patchy play serve them extremely well, providing a demotic American equivalent to the traditional flyting match. Edward Albee used to be the master of this mode, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* contained exchanges of insults which made Jimmy Porter seem almost polite. Thomas Babe's writing is at its best when he is modulating rapidly between invective and emotionality. Jake Bowsky, city editor on a doomed newspaper, can be quite affectionate when abusing his woman, and even when he is locking antlers with a younger steer who has become his rival, insult gives way to reminiscence, provocation to appeal.

At first these modulations appear fairly sophisticated, but the trick is used so often that they soon come to seem mechanical. The characters Babe is trying to depict are clever, temperamental, articulate and mercurial, while the actors – especially Dixie Carter, Vincent Gardenia and Sandy Dennis – give the impression of being so deeply in tune with their roles that they could improvise the mood-changes. What they cannot do is give the impression of spontaneity inside the strait-jacket of a script which so laboriously mimicks spontaneity.

What makes matters worse is that the play seems to be mainly about the differing reactions of these characters to a double crisis. The newspaper on which they work is closing down with the issue now in the press, but the city editor has omitted to give the staff a week's notice. "I wanted everybody to have fun, like me, to the bitter last." If nobody seems to mind much, this is not because of the other crisis. They are warned that a nuclear device is ticking away somewhere inside the building. Determined not to let reactions sink into melodramatic cliché, Babe makes his characters carry on for most of the time as if everything were normal, though occasionally they lapse into hysteria. A loud rumble makes the city editor sit huddled in a corner holding hands with the young reporter who is his rival. But the noise is caused by a fly-wheel that has come loose and rolled along the floor of the press room.

By 4.30 am, the hard-boiled Liz, who edits the women's page, has written a story about the giant explosion which rocked the mid-town area just before 7.00 am, causing thousands of deaths. Her intention is to move it on the wire with an embargo till 8.00 am. But the *sang-froid* counts for very little when the others seem as indifferent to the bomb as to the unheralded demise of the newspaper. No one even thinks of leaving the building.

Such tension as the play has depends mainly on revelations about personal relationships in the past and present. The best sequence is the one in which Bowsky's wife, appearing unexpectedly in the office, has her first meeting with the woman who has been sleeping with her husband for twenty years. "I only know you", she says, "from your bylines in the paper and also because Jake has been known to call your name out loud in the depths of his sleep." Like most of the other gags in the play, this is good enough to raise a laugh, but not good enough to make theatrical rhetoric sound like spontaneous conversation.

Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is available as an RSC Playtext (67pp. Methuen, £1.95, 0413 53310 7); Thomas Babe's *Buried Inside Extra* has been published in the Royal Court Writers series (30pp. Methuen, £1.95, 0 413 54120 7). Both are parts of special series produced by Methuen in association with theatres as both programme and playscript.

commentary

Art and artisanate

Nicholas Shrimpton

John Ruskin
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Jewels smoulder, mountains glisten, buildings shine from casts and drawings. The crucial exhibit, amid all this brilliancy, is a small dark photograph of an over-crowded gallery. In 1875 John Ruskin bought a stone cottage in Bellhagg Road, Walkley, Sheffield. There, in an upstairs room, he created an educational museum for the iron-workers of Yorkshire.

The Arts Council's touring exhibition, called simply *John Ruskin*, is both a celebration and a recreation of that pioneering endeavour. Britain, Ruskin argued, should have a "National Store" to counterbalance the National Debt. But that store should not be merely a depository. Its purpose was to quicken and inspire, to generate a new and living art. Ruskin's museum was in Sheffield because iron-work was the characteristic enterprise of nineteenth-century England. An aesthetic (and moral) education for iron-workers was therefore the quickest way to vivify the nation's culture.

If Ruskin were alive today I think we can be fairly certain that he would be locked, on one pretext or another, in a series of bitter battles with the Arts Council. That said, it still remains the case that the Arts Council is, in however attenuated a form, the real inheritor of Ruskin's socio-aesthetic purposes. The Guild of St George, Ruskin's own vehicle for such ideas, is alive and well but scarcely in a position to undertake a nation-wide crusade of artistic regeneration. The Arts Council, which is charged with just *such a dual purpose* of conservation and creation, is paying a timely tribute to the man who made its own existence possible.

The photograph of the Walkley Museum, though not identified quite as precisely as it might be (is this the new gallery added in 1884, or the alternative home in Meersbrook Park provided by Sheffield Corporation in 1897?), takes us to the heart of these didactic ambitions. The artisans of Sheffield were supplied with what seems to be an extraordinary jumble of geological specimens, paintings, prints, books, manuscripts and casts of architectural sculpture. But the blend was not random. This potent aesthetic cocktail was mixed with great care to produce, simultaneously, a reverence for nature, an acquaintance with good workmanship, and a sense of the moral and spiritual potential of great art. By the middle of this century the logic behind the mixture had been forgotten and the collection was dismantled. Now, after many years of scholarly work, particularly at the University of Reading, the Guild Museum is to return to a new home in its native city.

Jeanne Clegg has assembled, for this exhibition, more than seventy items from the collection first shown in that upstairs room at Walkley. They give us a powerful flavour of the distinctive museum which Sheffield will eventually be able to enjoy. More important even than this, however, is what she has placed around them. A further 180 exhibits illustrating Ruskin's life and work have been drawn from other sources and arranged on principles suggested by his own expository and didactic practice. Walking through this exhibition is an educational as well as an aesthetic experience, a demonstration of Ruskin's conception of the education of the eye.

At the centre of the assemblage is Ruskin the man. A glass case contains his hat, his sky-blue neck-tie, a map of the Alps, his geological hammer, his pencil-box and his pen. Around this mini-museum of his intellectual interests stand the memorabilia – portraits, letters and drawings of his mother, a silk pouch stiffened with a piece of gold, in which he carried a letter from Rose La Touche, speaks painfully of his disturbed emotional life. A childhood notebook, filled with precocious "sermons", is open at a characteristic meditation on "The Law of Sacrifice."

Radiating out from this is a series of visual essays, roughly chronological in plan, which traces the development of his mind. "The Iris of the Earth", "The Anatomy of the Mountains", "Swiss Life in the Olden Times" – the subdivisions sound like chapters in an intellectual biography, an impression reinforced by the fact that the foreword to the catalogue is by Tim Hilton, who is writing just such a thing. As chapters they manage to be coherent without becoming inflexible. "The Beginnings of Chivalry", for example, turns out to be as much concerned with Ruskin the zoologist as it is with the way in which St George's struggle with the dragon underlies his later political thought.

The general movement is from rocks to mountains (some superbly vigorous Ruskin water-colours here, hung cheek by jowl with Turner's much-loved "Junction of the Greta and the Tees at Rokeby"), from mountains to Swiss pastoral society, and from there to botany, Gothic architecture, Venetian painting and policy, Verona, Tuscany, zoology, more botany, and finally the "storm-cloud" which unites meteorology, mythology and madness. Each category is far more various than such rapid summary can suggest. "Proserpina", for example, though principally concerned with botanical drawing, includes an extraordinary exhibit from the Guild Museum in which "the moral history of England" is illustrated by the sequence of twenty-three coins. The "ghastly" gold crown of Henry VIII, on which the moral hangs, marks a break with medieval design. But it also carries the (botanical) inscription "Rosa Sina Spina". For Ruskin these words, as well as reminding him of the church of Santa Maria della Spina at Pisa, spoke of a sensual attitude to beauty which excluded sacrifice and pain. A numismatic display case, in other words, simultaneously epitomizes the argument of nineteenth-century medievalism and sends us back to the water-colours of roses, with our responses morally charged.

Lateral thinking as eccentric as that will either strike you as an infuriating piece of intellectual irresponsibility, or suggest an exhilarating, quasi-poetic freshness of mind. The densely associative quality of Ruskin's thought has rarely been so vividly demonstrated. By way of incidental reward you will also encounter some remarkably beautiful things. Only the large plaster casts of Gothic sculpture, two of which are illustrated upside down in the otherwise excellent catalogue (88pp. Arts Council, £3.95 at the exhibition, otherwise £6.30, 0 7287 0363 7) are dramatic enough to have an immediate impact on the eye. But the mass of small drawings and water-colours contains at least a dozen pieces which require us to think very seriously about the current under-estimation of Ruskin the painter.

On its opening in Sheffield the exhibition, described by its organizers as a "maze", was perhaps a little too labyrinthine and it would be nice to think that at Liverpool (July 7 to August 7), the Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendall (August 13 to September 18) and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (September 25 to November 13) it could be hung in a manner which reflects the sub-divisions of the catalogue more precisely. Even as a maze, however, it has a clue worth following. That well-known early iron-worker, Daedalus, would have loved it.

The City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery is to present a major exhibition of the work of David Cox (1783 – 1859), from July 26 to October 14. Cox began and ended his career in Birmingham, and the gallery possesses the largest collection of his work. The show will be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum from November 9 to January 8, 1984. A Central TV film on Cox will be broadcast on July 31.

"Woodcock going to catch a fly" and "Eagle's head": two water-colours by Ruskin from the exhibition reviewed here.

Confidence betrayed

Peter Kemp

Felix Krull
Channel 4

Felix Krull, on Channel 4, could hardly have been less felicitous. Dismally dubbed, it repeatedly featured dialogue that failed to synchronize with mouths moving on the screen. More jarringly, the entire adaptation failed to synchronize with Thomas Mann's novel. Characters were transformed, incidents invented or inverted. The book's tone – bracingly crisp and dry – thickened into cloying sauciness.

Eager to exploit the story's *fin de siècle* setting, the film proffered a skittish sequence of risqué rompings, all ooh-la-la and lingerie. For devotees of exotic underwear, in fact, it must have been a treat, with no opportunity missed for the exhibiting of unusual corsets, cami-knickers, curious combinations, garish garters and black *stocking-tops. Nor were other tastes* neglected. Felix's childhood sex-experiences – inconveniently unspecific in the book – were elaborated into pre-pubescent bath-scenes with a nubile nanny: lingering absorbedly round its nude stripling, the film seemed closer to *Death in Venice* than to *Felix Krull*. An especially favoured whim was voyeurism. Some interested third party regularly hovered close to Felix's couplings: As he tumbled on furs with Rozsa the prostitute, an overcoated neighbour juddered in eavesdropping ecstasy outside the door; his bedding of the blue-stocking, Diane Phillbert, came under the surveillance of a hotel detective.

Enthusiastically importing the crude, this dramatization omitted the crucial. The scene where Felix is taken to meet the actor, Müller-Rosé, for instance – an event which, he says, "will remain for ever in my memory" – was completely overlooked. Yet it is of central importance. Enchanted by the performer's debonair elegance on stage, Felix is thunderstruck on going behind scenes, to discover he is really a squinting mountebank covered in pustules: establishing the book's concern with stylish bravura and effrontery, this also pushes to the fore Mann's usual fascination with polarities. As with the more sombre novels – such as *Doctor Faustus*, some of whose scenes it teasingly burlesques – *Felix Krull* is keenly alert to the interdependence of brilliance and corruption, the civilized and the raw.

Such intense – and mutually intensifying – opposites were beyond the unambitious span of this adaptation. Here, tameness and sameness reigned. Characters bearing strongly distinctive features in the book were smoothed down into inanity. Particularly startling was the metamorphosis of Dona Maria Pia, the stately, severe *senhora* Felix meets in Lisbon. Not content with giving her some flaccid facial surgery – replacing her "haughty, compressed lips, flaring nostrils and . . . creases between her brows" with loose simperings, pouts and winks – the film, in a final piece of travesty, set her cavorting in bull-fighter's rig as a torrid toreador. Likewise, Felix's godfather, Schimmelpreester – whose "whole appearance gave the impression of a sharp and bitter turn of mind" – seemed here to have nothing to feel sour about, being processed into a bacchanalian *bon viveur*, quaffing champagne amid a bevy of buxom and often bare Bohemians.

Vapidity also infused the film's settings with an insipidly rosy hue. Where the novel accompanies Felix's suave scaling of the social heights with precise, alluring evocation of life in Paris or Lisbon, this adaptation confined itself to vague and banally "picturesque" backgrounds. Typically, Felix's initiation into the elegances of Paris was replaced by immersion in the vulgarities of Monte Carlo. The book's rapturously sensuous cataloguing of *de luxe* commodities coarsened into gross display.

Characterless in ambience, the film was even more so in its central figure. John Moulder-Brown looked right as the chic crook – combining, as Felix piquantly does, dark skin with blue eyes and blondness – but he never displayed a personality to match. Passive and null – ingenuous more than ingenious – he seemed a peculiarly implausible confidence man. Scenes requiring him to put on a performance proved outside his range. To the climactic comic episode where Felix dodges conscription by simulating an epileptic fit – something requiring the unleashing of an unnerving repertoire of mugged-up symptoms – he merely brought tiny twitchings suggestive of a cricked neck. The emptiness of his acting, though, was of a piece with the hollowness of the entire enterprise. Given its heavy investment in sex-scenes, it would be misleading to say that this film emasculated *Felix Krull*, but it certainly un-Manned it.

remainders

Eric Korn

Peak season for London Book Fairs has come and gone, and while no one is loudly rejoicing, there is a general air of I-think-I-shall-not-hang-myself-today. As is traditional, the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association's grand fair at the Europa monopolized the publicity, but knowledgeable visitors also found their way to the enormous bazaar of 150 stalls with which the *Provincial Booksellers had crammed* the Royal National and Russell Hotels. Then there were the various – ah – *salons des refusés* – till it seemed that every tavern and lodging house in Bloomsbury had cleared out its Lytton Lounge or Strachey Suite or Vanessa Belltower to accommodate a few wandering scholars with their rickety shelving and signs and chapbooks, sitting morosely by their wares, yawning and groaning (*it is considered very bad form to read the stock; it might give the clientele ideas*). Dealers, and public, seem to have decided, after two years of stasis, that books are not a bad thing to spend money on, either because things are getting better or because they are *getting very much worse. Dollars were* showing their strength, but I heard some Dutchmen, secure in the knowledge that nobody understands their language, complain that the prijzen van de boeken hier zijn skij-hij.

The smartest performance at any of the fairs was undoubtedly that of Michael Hosking of Deal, who some time back bought the library – a working, rather than a collector's library – of the novelist, scholar, publisher and all-round literary man, David Garnett, persuading the family, quite properly, that they would do at least as well by selling the whole library to a bookseller as by consigning the better books to auction and being *pleased with some results* and disappointed with others. Hosking spent a useful year cataloguing all the books (some three and a half thousand items), commissioned a prefatory essay by Nicolas Barker, added a check-list of the works of Richard Garnett, David Garnett, Edward Garnett, Constance, Martha, Ray, Olive and William Garnett and produced a very decent memorial to a man's life in books. Then, with consummate timing and Post Office co-operation, he sent catalogues out to arrive on the morning of the first day of the Europa Fair, disconnected his telephone and furnished his stand with a few selected books, a lot more catalogues, an order pad, and a smile *of quiet satisfaction*.

There was uproar, which grew the more uproarious when catalogue skimmers discovered that some of the items were very much cheaper than, for example, X or Y or Z would have charged. Some people were very unhappy, and one – a rival or a disappointed purchaser – managed to *persuade a Sunday Times man that the* whole thing was somehow deplorable. (Everybody made a lot of fuss about Woolf V. & L.S., *Two Stories*, the first publication of the Hogarth Press, which at £450 was deemed by some to be underpriced by a thousand or two.) But Mr Hosking, who understands about loss leaders, was not complaining; nor, if they had any sense, were the family of the late owner, nor, certainly, were the lucky winners at a good time was had by all.

[illegible] catalogued a list of books that [illegible] being sold, which included a [illegible] Chaucer, archive of some Norman Poets (names), and a true first of Voltaire's *Candide* 1759 which was bought by Edward Garnett for sixpence or a shilling off a bookstall in the Farringdon Road – a bookstall which still exists to this day. It does indeed, and indescribable, at least just now and in mixed company, are the scenes of rage, avarice, pride, envy, greed, lust and despair that are weekly enacted there, but true *Candides*, it must be said, are like true Crosses: each is precious and unassailable, but there tend to be enough to go round. More covetable perhaps were the ripe associations which were offered for sale: Christina Rossetti's Bible, Gibbon's copy of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, bought by J. M. Keynes and given to Garnett to spite Aldous Huxley, a copy, one of six hand-coloured by the author, of T. H. White's *Sword in the Stone*. (Another copy of that recently surfaced in London under romantic circumstances – booksellers' language for "very cheaply").

And I learnt something which has long puzzled me: the authorship of the anonymous *Form of Diary* (Pushkin Press 1939). *This is a rather intense* piece of work, full of initials and italics and dashes and dialogue not clearly assigned to speakers – what J thinks of what P said about T's affair with N. Because of its impenetrability, and its evident coterie quality, and because the book's second sentence contains the phrase "first I was a medium for a *message then I used the message to be* a medium for me", I long nurtured a theory, ridiculous as it now turns out, that the book was an undocumented work by – never mind, it is actually by Erica Cotterill, Rupert Brooke's cousin. But the other initials remain obscure. Who is the rough lover F? L.J.? V.? And mysterious K.M.? Katherine Mansfield? Karl Marx? Kingsley Martin? Krishna Menon? . . . No, it's a woman. Kate Millett? Karmen Miranda? And what can be the meaning of this curious passage on page 47: "Wretched review that of J.S., I come to think – good safe non-committal stodge – very thing for the Times Lit. Sup. of course . . .".

But no mention of the book whose existence I have long suspected, Garnett's projected biography of Vita Sackville-West, *Lady into Woolf*.

* * *

An amiable Devonian bookseller has sent me his entry for the Cal Coolidge prize for laconic diary-keeping. The diary is anonymous, but we know that the author lived in Exeter ("Mrs Ireland to Newton Poppleford"), was female, or at least transvestite ("Olive took my dress down to Mrs Firs"), musical ("got fiddlestrings from stores"), of ecclesiastical bent ("afternoon to cathedral; lovely anthem"), youthful ("French with Papa"); and given to good works ("took three eggs and a bunch of violets to Mrs Thorne"). There are interesting side-lights on Edwardian clerical life ("went to the Inland Revenue Office to fill up papers on abatement of Income Tax") and the occasional topical entry ("at half-past Ten saw two rockets from Cyril's window announcing that Mr Drake, C., was *returned triumphantly* to the Poll") but it is the week of January 23 (Septuagesima), 1910, wherein the diarist shows her mettle. Here it all is: "Flakes of Snow. Overcast./ Frost. Fine Cold White Frost. Called for Underskirt from Mrs Firs. Saw comet./ Showers Cold. Stormy, *Earthquake* Fine, Cold." May 4–8 is a quietly impressive sequence too: "Fine. Convent, Mrs Williams Called/ Showry/Windy/Rough. Cold wind. King Dead./ Cold." But Barnestline merriment ("went to Mrs Bishop's for tea and had a right good time") was not satisfying. There is mention of London, the Stores, Somerset House and the Royal Academy. The diary stops abruptly on June 11 (St *Barnabas, Apostle and Martyr*) with the haunting entry "Showers. From Randigger and to . . . Nothing [illegible]

How's your memory? Mine used to be capacious, about 12K or so, but I mislaid it somewhere and now feel the need of assistance. And I have a handful of enthusiastic helpers: W. T. Imeson, author of *Ideatypics or An Art of Memory* (London and Ramsgate 1844), the Reverend Robert Rowe Knott, Vicar of Halldon (*New Aid to Memory* in many parts), Major Benlowski (*A Handbook of Phrenotypics* 1842) and the delightful Ms Sewell, author of *Amy Herbert* and reviser and enlarger of Slater's *Sententiae Chronologicae* (1871).

They all speak highly of the Principle of Association and the Principle of Propinquity (the notions go back to the middle ages), but they apply them variously. Major Benlowski requires you to invent "tales" and here are the first three of the series that will remind you *of the Hebrew letters: "an invalid* upon his chair, close to him an *elf*"; "an iron handle of a box in which I keep pieces of *bass*"; "the poor Spanish-legion man made me think it was *game-all*". ("Bnss" of course is a kind of matting used in churches, and if you were thinking of a box full of frozen beer or rotting fish, you will never remember that the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet is B.)

Imeson teaches you how to memorize the important events of 1751 (Dr Doddridge died, Lord Eldon born, Antiquarian Society incorporated, all that stuff), which requires visualizing "a sapling elder tree, near it an antiquarian reading Doddridge" – *bum-drum imagery, scarcely ever far* from your cerebral hemispheres, I should suppose. *The New Aid* provides its own little pictures, which conceal various chronological and numerical rebuses. Gedaliah, Governor of Judah, dies 588BC? Simple: "*A gay dahlia* for Gedaliah. Ishmael the guest of Gedaliah, stabbed him at his own table, when, like this bent dahlia, he stopped and courtier-like offered pleasant promises, the *olly vow*, which he knew was false. *Olly vow* will give the date 588BC."

And Ms Sewell, using the same code, has a whole book full of astounding sentences which conceal the date, while recalling the event, from the Pyramid of Cheops ("An erection is Now Raised of Largest Size"; NRLS = 2450, BC of course) right down to the Great Exhibition ("All The World Lounge in our Transparent edifice"; TWLT = 1851).

Ms Sewell is somewhat off-hand in explaining the code. T is one because it has *one* stroke; N is 2 because it has *two*. M Similarly *three*. R is four because it is the last letter of *four*, L is five because fifty is *five* tens, D is six for no particular reason; C, G, K, or Q, make seven, and B, H, or V can be eight because they are the letters in beehive and W will do because it sounds like V; P or F are nine and S or Z nought. Sewell doesn't say why, but the Revd Knott, who uses the same system, says it is because the number nine looks like a pipe and a pipe often has a *puff* of smoke coming from it. Vowels don't count and can be used to fill up the sentences; thus if Moses was born, for the sake of argument, in 1571 that makes him The Legislator and Conductor of The Jews, because J counts as a vowel. "They Get Quit of *infidel Writers" reminds you that* Voltaire and Rousseau died in 1778, unless you happen to think of "They Get Rid of infidel Writers" or "They Become Quit of infidel Writers", which will give you the wrong dates, or "They Get Rid of Indecent Writers", which will make you think of John Cleland who died in 1789 and will do you no good at all.

Suitable words for composing chronograms about deaths are Now, Mortal, Revered, Lived (as in Lived No Longer), Lamented, Killed, Quit, Buried: Then Died Merry Ben; Then Did Great Rembrandt expire; Then Kneller No More appeared; and, pleasantly elliptical, The admirable Beethoven Never Appeared; again, which tells you that Ludwig Van joined the Eternal Tutti in 1827, the same year Turks Hated Navarino and Codrington And They Buried Nasty Canning, but doesn't alas, prevent you from believing that Bach, Berlioz or Bartók died in 1827.

You get the hang of it: Missolonghi *The angelic* Byron Never Roved again (or The adulterous Bounder Now Regrets Augusta). *New Aid to Memory* crams the letters together, hence *olly vow* for 588BC; Buy a Sole for the Battle of Trafalgar ("Even the fisherman, who cries *buy a sole*, respects this motto. *Buy a sole* and one thousand being added give the date 1805.") *Handbook of Phrenotypics* does the same but changes some of the values so "beef" is 98 instead of 80. Imeson applies something called the Ideatyphonicon to get similar far-fetched stories. Thus 1553, accession of Mary Tudor, is "apply a light" because "Mary's love of blazing faggots is an oft-told story". For the same event Sewell has the uninspired "Then lived and Loved unhappy Mary", while Rowe has the words "alloy 'em" with a picture of "a *poll* parrot destroying a book" and an explanation that is more raving: "*Poll* will suggest Mary, and the employment of the parrot will remind us that, however pure the doctrines of Christianity had become in the previous reign of Edward VI, Mary *thought proper to destroy them* or at least alloy 'em . . .".

The system has contemporary application. Want to remember what happened in 1963? (no, thanks). Well, there was the Lady Chatterley Trial (The Pornographer and Didact is Made available; or The Puritans Discomforted Magnificently) and of course The Four Disseminate Music.

What about 1983? The Falklands Benefit Maggie; Trusting Foot Wars Moderate; The Fools Vote Masochistically; The Peribbs Workers are Mugs. One could go on. . .

Among this week's contributors

ROBERT M. ADAMS's recent books include *The Lost Museum: Glimpses of Vanished Originals*, 1981.

F. G. BAILEY's books include *Morality and Expediency: The Folklore of Academic Politics*, 1977.

T. O. BEIDELMAN is the editor of *The Translations of Culture: Essays to E. E. Evans-Pritchard*, 1971.

CHRISTOPHER BOOKER's *The Games War: A Moscow Journal* was published in 1981.

RICHARD BOSTON is editor of *The Admirable Urquhart: Selected Writings*, 1975, and author of *Beer and Skittles*, 1976.

J. S. BRATTON's books include *Wilton's Music Hall*, 1980, and *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, 1981.

PETER BURKE is a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and the author of *Montaigne*, 1981.

JEREMY CATTO is a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

ANNE CHISHOLM's biography of Nancy Cunard was published in 1980.

ANTHONY CLARE is co-author with Sally Thompson of *Let's Talk About Me: A Critical Examination of the New Psychotherapies*, published last year.

NEIL CORCORAN's study of David Jones, *The Song of Deeds*, was published last year.

C. R. DODWELL is Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.

DOUGLAS DUNN's long poem, *Europa's Lover*, was published last year.

RICHARD FINDLATER is Editor of *The Author*, the quarterly journal of the Society of Authors.

ANTHONY FLETCHER's books include *The Outbreak of the English Civil War*, 1981.

M. R. D. FOOT's books include *Resistance: European Resistance to Nazism 1940–45*, 1976.

C. J. FULLER's *The Nayars today* was published in 1976. He is a lecturer in Anthropology at the London School of Economics.

MALCOLM GODDEN is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

COLIN GREENLAND's *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British "New Wave" in Science Fiction*, was published earlier this year.

TONY HARRISON's collection of poems, *Continuous*, was published in 1981.

ALBERT HOURANI's collections of essays, *Europe and the Middle East*, and *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* were both published in 1981.

LIAM HUDSON's most recent book, *Bodies of Knowledge: The Psychological Significance of the Nude in Art*, was published last year.

P. J. KAVANAGH is the editor of *Collected Poems of Ivor Gurney*, 1982.

HUGH KENNEDY is the author of *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 1981.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

CATHERINE LA FARGE is a lecturer in English at University College, Cork.

ROGER LOCKYER is Reader in History at Royal Holloway College, London, and author of *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592–1628*, 1981.

DUNCAN MACLEOD is a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford. His books include *Slavery, Race and the American Revolution*, 1975.

PETER MARSHALL is Professor of American Studies at the University of Manchester.

JILL NEVILLE's latest novel, *Last Ferry to Manly*, will be published next year.

OTTO PICK is Professor of International Relations at the University of Sussex.

JOHN ROGISTER is Associate Professor of History at the University of Paris X-Nanterre.

NICHOLAS SHRIMPTON is a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

LEONARD SCHAPIRO is co-editor with Joseph Godson of *The Soviet Worker: Illusions and Realities*, 1982.

FRANCES SPALDING's *Roger Fry: Art and Life* was published in 1981.

JULIAN SYMONS's books include the crime novel, *Sweet Adelaide*, 1980.

HUGH THOMAS's books include *the Cuban Revolution*, 1977, and *An Unfinished History of the World*, 1979.

I. A. A. THOMPSON is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Keele.

MARY WARNOCK is a Senior Research Fellow of St Hugh's College, Oxford. Her books include *Schools of Thought*, 1977.

H. R. WOUDHUYSEN is a lecturer in English at University College London.

CAROL ZEMEL teaches art history at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and is the author of *The Formation of a Legend: van Gogh Criticism 1890–1920*, 1980.

Among literary awards recently given: the Cholmondeley Award, of £1,000, has been shared between three poets "who have also served English literature variously in the realms of teaching, journalism and publishing": John Fuller, Craig Raine and Anthony Thwaite. The Eric Gregory Trust Awards, given for the encouragement of poets under the age of thirty, this year total £8,000 and have been given to Martin Stokes, Hilary Davies, Michael O'Neill, Lisa St Aubin de Teran and Deirdre Shanahan. The Tom-Gallon Award, a biennial short story prize of £500, has been given to Dermot Healy for his story "The Tenant" from his collection *Banished Misfortune*.

to the editor

Language Acquisition

Sir, – As I have been quoted in apparent support of views I do not share, perhaps I may be permitted to clarify the position T. P. Waldron ironically attributes to me (Letters, June 17).

Linguistics has a vast purview, from experimental phonetics to stylistic analysis, from formal semantics to the writing of grammars for exotic languages. Every part of this range seems to me to be worthy of study and to have attracted serious scholarship. In my opinion, however, the most exciting and fruitful work of this century has arisen as a result of the Chomskyan revolution. Unfortunately the claims and achievements of this school have suffered from misunderstanding and misrepresentation. The following is an attempt to clear up one or two of the most recent.

Chomskyan linguistics has been largely preoccupied with language as a reflection of human mental processes. As a result of Chomsky's work it is no longer controversial to assert that our linguistic behaviour is rule-governed and that the rules concerned are mentally represented. The set of such rules constitutes, by definition, the individual's *grammar*. The grammar, in conjunction with other cognitive *faculties such as memory and logic*, determines the infinite set of sentences that constitute a *language*. To say that linguistics has grammar rather than language as its domain is simply to say that one is abstracting away from the contribution of such factors as encyclopaedic knowledge and logical ability in one's study of the (linguistic) rule systems humans master. The feasibility of this enterprise is perhaps controversial – I happen to be impressed by its success – but its logical status as an intellectually respectable position to adopt is not seriously at issue.

The idealization that "language acquisition is instantaneous" embodies the claim that the different stages that children go through in the process of mastering their language have no significant effect on the form of the grammar they end up knowing. I take it as apodictic that language *development* is gradual, but that one two-year-old may say "no want cabbage" and another "want cabbage no" has no effect on the grammar each ultimately ends up with. This fact seems neither trivial nor a *priori* obvious, hence the need for distinguishing language development and language acquisition.

Whether children can usefully be said to "learn" their first language depends on what one means by "learn". The avoidance of the term for language acquisition is prompted by the observation that the growth of the child's knowledge of language seems to be different, in terms of speed, generality and facility, from the development of his knowledge of physics or chess, and to have much in common with the development of other genetically determined faculties such as the visual system. (Fodor's recent *Modularity of Mind* contains detailed discussion.) At one level the dispute is terminological, but the use of the single term "learn" risks obscuring an interesting conceptual distinction which it is counter-productive to blur.

All these points were spelt out in the lecture *Speculative Linguistics* that Mr Waldron refers to, so I find his selective quotations somewhat disingenuous. In particular I had assumed that it was obvious that my closing remarks were meant to refer to my own speculations rather than those I had cited from others. Sarcasm is an effective rhetorical device; it is hardly a substitute for rational debate.

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Japan in the Passing Lane: An Insider's Account of life in a Japanese auto factory, by Satoshi Kamata, which was reviewed in the *TLS* of July 1, is published in the United Kingdom by Allen and Unwin, £9.95. 0 04 338 106 5.

Giraudoux on War

Sir, – *Pace* Harold Hobson (Letters, June 17) Cassandra is not "the most far-seeing character" in *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*. She prophesies that Helen will not be handed back to the Greeks, and she is wrong. There is no reason to suppose that her identification of Hector with the wartiger – a typical Giraldudian paradox given undue prominence in the earlier title to Christopher Fry's translation – is any less liable to be overturned by events.

I agree that Ulysses is not convinced by Hector, but neither is it it the latter's charm that persuades him to sue for peace; it is because "Andromaque a le même battement de cils que Pénélope". Similarly it is Ajax's attentions to Andromaque that first provoke Hector's anger in the final scene of the play. All that was needed then was for someone to stay Hector's arm, as he himself would have done in parallel *circumstances*. Interestingly Cassandra is the only one who makes any attempt to perform this function by edging Andromaque out of the way, but Hector's javelin is still half-raised when Demokos rushes on. No one in fact, apart from Hector, retains any genuine hope for peace throughout the play, which is why, despite his successive victories, he feels he is fighting a losing battle. As for Demokos, clearly based on the rabble-rousing Paul Déroulède, he gets nothing but what he deserves. Where peace is at stake, the laws of one's country matter no more than international law, as had been shown in Hector's encounter with Busiris.

The outbreak of war in the play represents the triumph of unreason and despair over reason and constructive human endeavour. Giraudoux, true Frenchman that he was, was always on the side of reason. The trouble would seem to be that Sir Harold, understandably, is viewing the play from the post-war perspective of the 1950s, when the first *London production* took place, instead of the pre-war one of the 1930s.

P. R. FAWCETT.

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Agnes Heller

Sir, – I do not doubt that Agnes Heller has something to say, nor that it may be important. I am sure, though, that Seyla Benhabib and Robert J. Williams (Letters, June 3) underestimate the difficulty of seeing quite what it is that she is saying, and separating what is enlightening from what merely sounds good. To that extent my reaction is, unashamedly, "positivistic". *Unlike pre-war* positivists, though, I think that the motive which most effectively deters people from writing with obscuring portentousness is not fear of criticism but fear of being laughed at.

ADAM MORTON.

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Ernest Newman

Sir, – In his review (June 17) of Martin Gregor-Dellin's study of Wagner Michael Tanner is quite wrong to write that Ernest Newman "omits to *provide* the dates of the first complete performance of *The Ring*". In the second part of Chapter 26 of the last volume of his *Life of Wagner* Newman not only states the dates of all three cycles but lays out clearly the dates of the three rehearsal-cycles and the final general rehearsal. He keeps referring to the dates of the first cycle throughout the text at this point in his biography. *For instance*, we read that "the Kaiser descended on Bayreuth for the first cycle [but] was only able to see the *Rhinegold* on the 13th August and *The Valkyrie* on the 14th . . ." and the notorious story of poor Fafner having to fight without a neck in the performance of *Siegfried* we're told was on the 16th. Again, Newman stresses that Nietzsche planned "to be present at the first public cycle which would begin on the 13th . . .".

Dr Tanner is, with respect, wrong to say that in "determining the precise date of Nietzsche's departure from Bayreuth" Newman's "sense of proportion deserts him". It isn't that Newman wants detective work for its own sake but that he is desperate to reveal the tissue of mendacity that Elisabeth, Nietzsche's sister, created around her brother; and Newman can only do this by showing that she falsified the dates of his letters and implied that Nietzsche's suddenly leaving Bayreuth was caused by his having weighed up Wagner's art and found it wanting, whereas the real reason was the terrible eye-strain that *he was suffering from at the time*. Newman exploded the legend, but it took long, careful research to do so.

CHRISTOPHER NICHOLSON.

Bedford Modern School, Bedford.

John Payne Collier

Sir, – *On April 4, 1975, my letter* announcing the discovery of Hume's MS annotations on a British Library copy of Volume 3 of the *Treatise on Human Nature* appeared in your columns. Since that time I have come upon information that leaves me less certain than I was then about the authenticity of the annotations. Two considerations now prompt me to express my misgivings. One is the renewed interest in the forger John Payne Collier (*vide* the recent exchange of letters in the *TLS* following Arthur Freeman's review (April 22) of Dewey Ganzel's book on Collier). The other is the fact that some of my published opinions concerning the annotations seem to have become the tacit assumptions of Hume editors (*vide* The Oxford University Press's revised reissue of the L. A. Selby-Bigge edition of the *Treatise* in which some of the annotations are silently incorporated into the text).

Apart from Ganzel's recent attempt to exculpate him it has indeed been the *cataloguing crisis in the British* Museum in the 1840s that a Royal Commission was appointed in 1849 to look into its affairs. The man appointed Secretary to the Royal Commission was none other than John Payne Collier, who, it is recorded, took special interest in the question of how best to catalogue the library stock. Again, whether Collier actually laid hands on the duplicate Volume 3 at this time I cannot say. Nor would I wish to make too much of the mere fact that Collier and the duplicate Volume 3 were both in the British Museum at the same time. The duplicate Volume 3 was by no means the only uncatalogued book in the possession of the British Museum in the 1840s. Nor, for that *matter*, was Collier the only person with access to uncatalogued material. Anthony Panizzi, Keeper of Printed Books, in testifying before the Royal Commission, had complained of the difficulty of ensuring the safety of the British Museum collection of printed books. He was troubled by the fact that at least 150 staff members had "home keys" and could enter the library – with their friends – at any hour.

Could someone have forged Hume's MS emendations on to the duplicate copy? The possibility cannot be excluded. My evidence for there being some connection between the "Hume" annotated copy in the British Library and one particular forger, John Payne Collier, is, I admit, circumstantial, not to say tenuous. However, I believe it sufficient to warrant the serious consideration of a question that has not before been considered, namely, might not the annotations be forgeries?

My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that the notes *are* in Hume's hand and, while I cannot absolutely warrant the genuineness of the holograph, I remain *as convinced* as ever, on the basis of the internal evidence, that the annotations must at least have originated with Hume. But what we need, now is a thorough scientific examination of the annotations.

R. W. CONNON.

Linacre College, Oxford.

Sir, – I am relieved that Dewey Ganzel (Letters, June 24) has confined himself to a contrary description of Malone's pre-Collier transcript of Henlowe's Diary. This, he now says, contains two "modern forgeries" which Collier can't have composed, and *ergo* Collier is not wholly guilty, etc, etc: see ff 46 and 64v. I begin to wonder if *Ganzel has access to the* books he cites; let alone the manuscripts. The first entry ("Mr Mastone") has been quite rehabilitated by Foakes and Rickert, 1960 ("inserted by Henslowe", p 124); the second ("mr Porter") is "perhaps" a forgery, though accepted as genuine by Greg (1908), and at any event nothing in spirit or appearance like the long gaudy fabrications we confront in Collier's edition, all firmly denounced by all modern editors.

I am hardly unaware that palaeographical opinion is mixed on two or three of the minor interlineations in Henslowe's Diary. Indeed I dwelt on this in my original review, as indicative of the problems raised by the very existence of the flagrant additions.

I cannot understand what Ganzel means about my impugning his *motives*. Surely I have been impugning his text? I should have thought my charges, far from being "unsupported", have been documented to the point of tedium.

ARTHUR FREEMAN.

5 Bryanston Square, London W1.

The British Crown

Sir, – I was somewhat puzzled by the use of the word "fatuous" by Norman Gash in his review of David Butler, *Governing Without a Majority* (June 3), to describe Mr Benn's suggestion of bringing in the Speaker of the House of Commons as a kind of umpire in the exercise of the Crown prerogatives in the event of a hung Parliament. I can see that the proposal would offend an ardent monarchist, which Mr Benn, I suspect, is not; but in itself and from his point of view, I cannot see that it is foolish.

What I do find interesting is to note that while Gash takes a reasonably sceptical attitude towards excessive deference to the legislature, he does not seem willing to extend it further, to the whole apparatus of government, of which the monarchy is a glamorous and emotive, but hardly essential, part. This limitation, which is shared by a good many political theorists, tends to conceal the fact that government is essentially an exercise of power, whether by an individual or by a group, which is ultimately based upon force, but which in many societies, and particularly those which claim to be democracies, finds it useful to appeal to public opinion. To do this, a kind of political mythology is devised or *inherited*, like the idea of the general will, the "good Tsar" or the royal prerogative, to justify the claims of the few to rule the many. This in turn provides material for arguments about what may or may not be done constitutionally which, considered practically, are quite unreal. In the last analysis, Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Hobbes are to be reckoned among the greatest of political thinkers, because they are not taken in by the claims of the rulers of human societies. Why, after all, should those who exercise political power expect the veneration of their fellows? *Perceperunt mercedem suam.*

GERALD BONNER.

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Karl Popper

Sir, – "*La calunnia è un venticello* . . .". Rossini's Don Basilio knew what the world is like, and since many more people read reviews (especially hostile ones) than read philosophical writings it can never be too early to erect a windbreak against the "venticello" which may well be started by the monstrous allegations you announce on your cover (July 1) as "Doubts about Popper". I am not a philosopher, but I can read (even "very fine print"). May I therefore invite your readers to examine Popper's publications and to judge for themselves whether he can have been busy throughout his life hiding his true opinion about human fallibility and the growth of human knowledge in his exceptionally lucid prose?

E. H. GOMBRICH.

19 Briardale Gardens, London NW3.

'The Brothers Powys'

Sir, – Peter Redgrove in his review of *The Brothers Powys* (May 27) has compounded the talents of two of the sisters.

Marion, whose book Lace and Lacemaking has recently been republished, was the expert on lace; while Katie wrote both *Blackthorn Winter* and *Driftwood* under the name of Philippa.

PETER FRASER.

Gwasg Lwn, 33 Edith Avenue, Toronto, Ontario.

Barbara Pym Memorial

Sir, – The novelist Barbara Pym lived for the last seven years of her life here in the Oxfordshire village of Finstock, worshipped regularly at Holy *Trinity Church and is buried in its* churchyard.

We are now hoping to instal a plaque in her memory inside the church, and we feel that many of your readers may wish to help us. We are not seeking large sums, and suggest a top limit of £10 from any one source. Contributions should be in the name of "Barbara Pym Memorial" and sent to our treasurer, R. V. Redston, at the address below, or direct to the account at Barclay's Bank, Charlbury, Oxfordshire. All will be acknowledged.

GILBERT PHELPS.

Bridlepath, Gadden Hill, Finstock, Oxfordshire.

Clusters of immediatists

Duncan Macleod

LAWRENCE J. FRIEDMAN
Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830–1870
344pp. Cambridge University Press. £20.
0 521 24429 3

The interest of historians in American abolitionism has so far proved insatiable. An unending stream of books and articles appears on the subject despite fairly general agreement that abolitionists constituted an extremely vocal minority whose direct influence was almost inversely proportional to their verbosity. Any new book almost inevitably, therefore, attracts the question: do we need it? To a surprising extent over the past decade the answer has remained, yes. Three works, in particular, have greatly extended our understanding. Lewis Perry has dug more deeply and subtly than anyone before him into the formal *thought of radical abolitionists*; Ronald Walters has located that abolitionism more securely within the general cultural context of the times; and Peter Walker has skilfully exploited biographical approaches to explain general patterns of behaviour and motivation. It is a major accomplishment of the present volume that Lawrence J. Friedman not only compels us to acknowledge the importance of his own work but also confirms, even as he modifies their findings, the importance of the works of Perry, Walters and Walker. He offers a highly original interpretative framework, significant in itself, but *significant* also as a place where their essential themes appear to intersect.

Friedman concentrates his attention upon that cohort of abolitionists who became immediatists in the early 1830s. This focus permits an analysis which emphasizes the constant interplay between the forces of stability and change, and one factor which distinguishes *Gregarious Saints* from the majority of its predecessors is its concern with the dynamics of anti-slavery immediatism. Friedman analyses those dynamics from a special vantage-point. He sees them as emerging only partly from a working-out of the logic of anti-slavery thought (Perry's approach); only partly from the interplay of anti-slavery ideas within the general American cultural context (Walters's approach); and only partly from the mediation of general ideas through individual personality (Walker's approach). Of greater significance, he suggests, were the more narrow social contexts in which abolitionists operated.

The early unity of immediatism, which stemmed from a common opposition to the activities of the American Colonization Society, was only superficial. Immediatists differed among themselves as much as they differed from other approaches to reform and those differences were reflected in, and fed by, the social groups they formed. Friedman calls them "intimacy circles" or "clusters"; alternatively, noting their function as refuges from the public obloquy hurled upon abolitionists, he terms them "sanctuaries". The behaviour of abolitionists and the development of their ideas were shaped in important *ways by the need to maintain those* clusters and, indeed, their maintenance became in varying degrees an end in itself. The first chapters of *Gregarious Saints* concern themselves with a study of the group dynamics of three clusters: the "insurgents" of the Boston Clique around William Lloyd Garrison; the "stewards of the Lord" centring upon Lewis Tappan in New York City; and the "voluntarists" of upstate New York, led by Gerrit Smith.

It is a weakness of Friedman's analysis that he alleges a general pattern of clustering as an important feature of abolitionist organization and behaviour without establishing the existence of any clusters other than these three. Since he strongly emphasizes, moreover, the role of leadership in maintaining them one cannot readily take on trust their importance among more anonymous anti-slavery personnel. Those with which he does deal, on the other hand, contain most of the major abolitionist figures so *their* significance cannot be gainsaid.

Nowhere was the survival of the group and of harmony within it more important than within the Boston Clique. More bitterly opposed to the *American Colonization Society* than their colleagues elsewhere, they were almost equally hostile to the whole empire of benevolent reform for failing to join in the denunciation of colonization. Strongly antinomian, their emphasis upon individual free will and moral autonomy, and their attacks upon institutionalism, even with *respect to the churches, isolated them* more completely than was the case for most of their colleagues. Their own circle became truly a sanctuary, the preservation of which was a matter of prime importance. Not surprisingly, the Boston Clique was more introspective than other clusters as it *wrestled with the problem of* reconciling self-willed, independent-minded individuals with the Christian imperative towards, and their own special need of, a collective and harmonious life.

Tappan's "stewards of the Lord" remained more firmly rooted in an evangelical, church-based orientation. Their links with other reformers were never cut so completely as were those of the Garrisonians and their faith in a divine destiny, as contrasted to the Garrisonian commitment to man's moral autonomy, preserved their optimism in the face of all the objective data which might be expected to have undermined it. Less introspective, they were more willing to reach out and work with others of like, but not identical dispositions. They were also more socially conservative, unwilling to repudiate their society's institutions and equally unwilling to flout its conventions by, for instance, following the Garrisonian lead and granting a major role in the movement to women.

Least introspective, and least able to maintain even the existence of their own circle, were the "cultural voluntarists" around Gerrit Smith in upstate New York. Committed to a belief in the importance of the voluntary association of individuals in a collective endeavour to rid their society of slavery, they were realistic enough to see that, to be effective, such voluntary association required participation in the political process. As they became more involved in the Liberty Party so their coherence weakened, the group began to disintegrate, and by about 1850 only Smith and William Goodell remained. As they struggled to reconcile their faith in the voluntary adhesion of individuals to a collective moral aim with a contrary political experience they became deeply pessimistic.

Friedman's identification and depiction of these groups is skilful and impressive. It rests upon a detailed analysis not only of the formal publications and explicitly anti-slavery correspondence of abolitionists but also upon the extensive private, indeed intimate correspondence they left behind. The warmth of abolitionist friendships, their mutual respect, the importance they attached to collective endeavour, their patterns of visiting and hospitality, all emerge as powerful determinants of their public behaviour and collective ideologies. But Friedman does not concentrate wholly upon the internal dynamics of these groups. He recognizes a dialectical relationship between them and the larger society and isolates three themes for the purpose of analysing that relationship.

When the American Antislavery Society was formed in 1833 its members were all male; women operated in association with men through the medium of auxiliary societies – such a pattern was well established in the empire of benevolent reform bodies. The Boston Clique, however, included women among its members from the very beginning. The principal meeting-place of its members was the house of Maria Chapman and the Weston sisters. How the Boston Clique came to be so constituted Friedman fails, in an unconvincing and uncharacteristically murky section, to make clear. But as they worked alongside women, men came to respect them as their equals and so modified their conception of "woman's sphere". One feature of "woman's sphere" they retained was a belief that women were the "purer" sex, less sullied by ambition, by aggressive drives and by the pursuit of self-interest. The more they worked alongside these sources of moral purity the more confident men became of their ability to maintain their own innocence, despite association with others less committed than themselves to the pursuit of just goals; and the more ready they became, therefore, to reach out for cooperation with such people in the interest of anti-slavery effectiveness. The need to *reach out became ever greater as their* goal remained elusive, as internal friction took toll of intimacy clusters, and as a new generation of immediatists, their commitments forged in a different fire, clamoured for attention.

Over time, then, women's role in abolitionism increased in importance and helped to generate a less isolationist stance. But while sex relations became more liberal the same could not be said for race relations. A willingness to listen to black opposition to colonization, and a degree of commitment to black rights, were distinguishing characteristics of early immediatism, especially among the insurgents. While it was never repudiated that commitment decayed. It did so under pressure from blacks whose emphasis upon black rights was far stronger and who regarded that stress as an integral part of the anti-slavery movement itself; blacks also reacted sharply to the equality-denying, ethno-centric missionary character of most abolitionism with its desire to uplift and improve. Moreover, association with blacks was deemed by whites to weaken the prospects of successful cooperation with the more prejudiced members of white society outside immediatist anti-slavery circles. Friedman's analysis of the changing influence of the racial factor is a useful corrective to the more common static picture presented by historians.

But it begs many questions. As the insurgent commitment to blacks weakened so that of the Tappanites, slightly, and of Gerrit Smith and William Goodell, greatly, increased. This Friedman demonstrates clearly. How, then, does one reconcile his explanation with the fact that association with blacks was apparently *directly* correlated with the extent to which these groups *actually* cooperated with politicians and other non-immediatists? In common with almost all historians, moreover, Friedman places great stress upon the racially prejudiced character of white society. There can be no doubt this was a dominant feature but even in the most deeply prejudiced Mid-West it was by no means pervasive. In various Western referenda in the 1840s and 1850s on black suffrage and other black rights question, an average of 30 per cent of the voters supported those rights. It is not clear that an espousal of black rights was any more unpopular, politically, than espousal of antislavery itself.

Friedman's third dialectical theme, that of the commitment of abolitionists to peaceful means, a commitment which apparently weakened in the 1830s and 1860s, is less original and less significant for his overall thesis. The most interesting feature he brings out is the ambivalence of abolitionists with respect to violence, from the beginning. The transition was less significant than others have suggested because *commitment was never total* in the first place.

Friedman carries his discussion through the Civil War to the post-war disputes over whether and when to disband the anti-slavery societies. The continued existence of the early circles, especially in Boston, was again a factor in the timing of dissolution, as was the psychological need of abolitionists in general to be able to claim for themselves success in their cause.

Friedman's analysis is not flawless, but it is creative and impressive. Just as important as what he has said is what he has not said. In the *interests* presumably of coherence, he has quite legitimately not attempted to explore all the implications of his findings for an understanding of questions others before him have posed. What, for example, was the relative effectiveness of different abolitionist approaches? The introspection of the Garrisonians, and the unrealistic optimism of the Tappanites, contrast unfavourably in his analysis with the realistic appraisals of the voluntarists around Smith, reversing the pecking-order of most recent literature. Smith, indeed, emerges as clearly entitled to more impressive biographical attention than *he has thus far received.*

Or to take another example: our understanding of the transition from anti-slavery gradualism to immediatism between 1923 and 1831 remains much as David Brion Davis elucidated it in 1962. One of the factors Davis isolated, as distinguishing gradualists from immediatists was the tendency of many of the former to look towards emancipation of the *churches* and themselves by disassociation from the sin of slavery; and of the latter to look towards the abolition of slavery itself. Yet the introspection of the Garrisonians runs parallel to that *gradualist tendency*, just as the optimism of the Tappanites that God's will be done runs parallel to the earlier gradualist faith in inevitable progress. A transition undoubtedly occurred, but was it as complete or distinct as we have long considered it to be?

Abolitionism may have had little direct influence in its day, but Friedman has investigated it in terms which throw considerable light on many important aspects of American history. Significant in itself *Gregarious Saints* confirms the field of abolitionist studies as one still pregnant with possibilities.

The hand of Whitehall

Peter Marshall

J. M. SOSIN
English America and the Revolution in the Reign of George III. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. 1982. 245pp. $25.00.
0 8032 4183 2

In this, the second of three volumes devoted to the history of the English colonies in North America from the Restoration to the death of Queen Anne, J. M. Sosin considers events prior to and following the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In so doing he continues an approach which, as he indicated in the first volume, seeks to strike a balance between the conflicting approaches of the old "imperial" school created by Andrews and Gipson, to be queried for laying too much stress on events in London, *and of more recent but strictly limited* accounts of colonial settlements, viewed in isolation. *English America and the Revolution of 1688* takes transatlantic links, or the lack of them, as its central theme, obscured though it is at times by the description of local events.

The revolution of 1688 was occasioned by upheaval in the colonies but was not, in the words of Sosin, "a sole cause of political and administrative change". Under whatever monarch, the administrators of Whitehall faced problems of colonial management that transcended differences in imperial policy. This point is perhaps unduly stressed here: if James II and his servants should not be simply condemned as eager enforcers of Catholicism and despotism, their leaning towards authoritarian control, no matter how impractical, an impulse this might have been given the resources to hand, was sufficiently manifest to arouse the suspicions of the colonists. Those seeking from American events further insight into James's general intentions in matters of Church and State will not benefit greatly from this interpretation: Sosin seems disposed to give James the benefit of the doubt. He is however more successful in demonstrating the variety of grounds on which the colonists opposed imperial government of whatever political complexion.

By the last quarter of the seventeenth century the American colonies had developed a cultural diversity within and between their societies, but which had yet to find expression in specific political forms. In some cases the process of change had led away from, rather than towards, distinctive outlooks; in the 1680s Massachusetts could not be considered to possess such political or religious unity as it did half a century before. Historians' attempts to declare episodes, such as Bacon's rebellion in Virginia or Leisler's seizure of power in New York, to be anticipations of the next century's Revolution founder on an evident lack of coherent ideology. Colonial interests were involved, imperial administration, or its failure, was under attack. The absent element was that of a larger purpose to which a popular majority might subscribe. Change could be achieved or resisted, not by an appeal to arms but by a patient residence, such as increase Mather undertook in London while seeking to sustain the Massachusetts charter.

This did not mean, however that Whitehall was all-powerful. Its authority was subject to much qualification. In the first instance, colonial matters were often of little account in the larger context of European conflict, and were usually entrusted to politicians of but minor standing. Second, imperial resolves were rarely accompanied by the provision of means for their enforcement: colonial administrators faced a thankless task and were, perhaps on that account, difficult to recruit. It would seem that willingness to serve, rather than allegiance prior to 1688, was the prime consideration for an appointment after the Revolution. By the end of the century an experienced administrator such as William Blathwayt was determined upon the need for a more effective imperial structure, while the colonies, diverse as they were in government, economic interests, social and religious composition, possessed a common interest in sustaining local authority, disputed though its control might be within their own bounds.

The colonies were not entirely neglected by Britain but neither were they regulated in a Spanish manner. Conflicts between Governors and governed were continual and inevitable, but were not, as yet, crucial: there was no possibility of the North American colonies either becoming a Jacobite stronghold or of their breaking free from the imperial connection. Yet the basic incompatibility of metropolitan and local interests could already be glimpsed: how far this situation would become more apparent by 1714 may perhaps be indicated in the third volume of this useful assessment of a period that has received less attention than it deserves.

Volume 20 of the projected sixty volume *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* has recently been published (760pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £40.50. 0 691 04582 8). The volume, the last of the series to appear under the editorship of Julian P. Boyd, covers the period April 1– August 4, 1791.

With a watching brief

Frances Spalding

ALAN ROSS
Colours of War: War Art 1939–45
192pp. Cape. £12.50.
0 224 02038 2

"What is missing, however", writes Alan Ross, of R. V. Pitchforth's war paintings, "is the human dimension: the tragic sense that questions and analyses." This book makes clear that Pitchforth was not alone in his failing, and that circumstances were largely to blame. British war artists during the Second World War enjoyed certain privileges that those in the First did not: whereas in 1916 the first official war artist had been given the rank of Second Lieutenant, those in the 1939–45 war were made honorary Captains and enjoyed much greater freedom of movement; they had access to drivers, travel by plane and, when on board ship, a character like Barnett Freedman enjoyed the companionship of its captain. It was, as Edward Ardizzone's watercolours remind us, a cosy war. If viewed from a certain angle. Unlike C. R. W. Nevinson, who had during 1914–18 observed the fighting from the front line, above the lines in an observation balloon and behind enemy lines in an aeroplane, most Second World War artists only ever witnessed the home front: factory production, steel and quarry workers, underground shelters and scenes of devastation. Those that followed in the wake of army and naval battles, did so from a position of relative comfort and security. "A maddening war", joked Ardizzone, with barely veiled complacency, "only the dead and dying stay still for you to draw."

This, then, is for the most part a book about a protected species. However, three artists did lose their lives, though only one of these had seen active service: Thomas Hennell disappeared in Burma; Eric Ravilious *took off on a* reconnaissance flight in Iceland on a plane that never returned; and Albert Richards, ostensibly out of danger after four years in the army, was killed crossing a minefield in a jeep. The dangers, though real, were deceptively distant for this was a war with a different perspective: battles were fought at long range and the bomber pilot rarely saw the effects of his task; "a damned unnatural sort of war" R. N. Currey termed it. Inevitably this affected the artists' viewpoint, and, as Ross observes, machines were on the whole regarded with more curiosity than men. The horror and pity of war were now too familiar to make necessary the savagely anti-heroic indictment of war-time propaganda that Nevinson had produced in 1915. Most artists included in this book regarded war as a fact and necessity, not a political crusade; like the poetry of the period, the mood was low-key, the stance, not one of protest, but passive and celebratory. The war was to be accepted, endured and observed.

The War Artists' Advisory Committee, set up in November 1939, played a vital part in providing artists with subjects. It met weekly and was not short of funds; thirty painters were given full-time salaries usually for periods of six months, a hundred more received specific commissions and a further two hundred had works bought in. Alan Ross details the Committee's work for the most part uncritically. He produces items "taken more or less at random" from the minute books and letters housed in the Imperial War Museum and offers no explanation as to why ninety-six of the 122 artists considered in February 1940 were regarded as unsuitable. In the early stages of the war artists frequently complained about the distance at which they were kept from crucial events. Ross admits this but does not investigate the softening effects of privilege. Relieved of active service, commissioned and salaried artists were asked to "record the War", yet were kept from experiencing precisely that which *would have given* their art relevance and bite. Subsequently the term "War" was amended to "war-time activities", encouraging still gentler subjects: the escape of a zebra from the zoo during an air-raid, CEMA's canteen concerts and the jam-making activities of the Women's Institute.

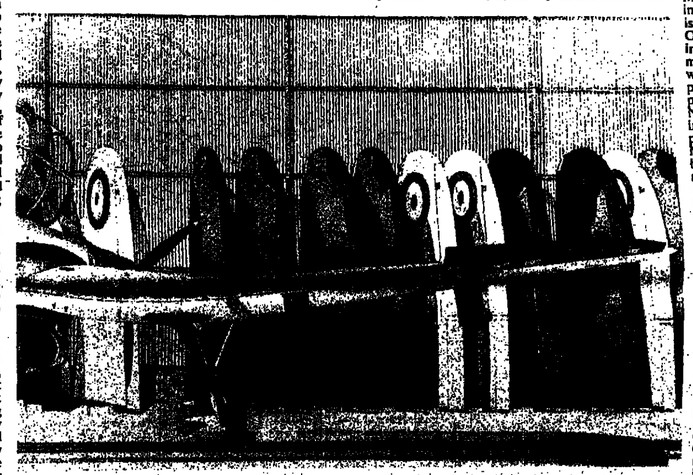
When a roomful of war artists' recent pictures went on show at the National Gallery in 1943 one critic complained that they lacked war consciousness. Even Kenneth Clark, the Committee's Chairman, later admitted that the general level of work was "mediocre and tame". The period mood favoured a poetic, neo-romantic style (a "*patriotic isolationist self-*preservationist movement" as William Scott described it). It was best used to convey the hellish light of furnace or foundry, the torpor of troops confined to their barracks and nocturnal scenes of the Blitz. It depended on effects rather than facts and was ill suited to monumental subjects. It directed Graham Sutherland's war paintings, which he aptly categorized as "a kind of imaginative-realist journalism". Very little Second World War art achieved more than this.

The desire to produce an accurate record favoured the illustrators. Edward Bawden, one of the first of the WAAC's appointments, went to France, then to the Middle East where he concentrated not on the drama of war, but on its topography, on, for instance, the architectural extravagance of Menelik's palace at Addis Ababa. Bawden, Freedman, Ardizzone and Anthony Gross adopted idiosyncratic viewpoints but rarely paused to affect an attitude. As Ross comments, "The idea of war in relation to the convivial nature of Ardizzone's art, with its plump figures and curvaceous lines, is faintly *incongruous.*" *But the vivid,* spontaneous result satisfied a love of anecdote which, in time, took on nostalgic appeal. It is a tradition recently upheld by Linda Kitson in the Falklands and admired by Bawden in the art of Anthony Gross:

> Fresh observations and quiet humour; unpretentious and good; the school of Ardizzone and Topolski – the sound tradition of English draughtsmanship and illustration which harks back to Rowlandson and Bunbury, don't you agree?

Alan Ross, himself a war poet, served on the Arctic convoys to Russia and writes with feeling of the fidelity with which Eric Ravilious portrays "thin skies, the freezing aircraft and guns, the cold seas". He has chosen to adopt a biographical approach and, in the form of potted histories, outlines the work of only twenty-six artists, listing a handful more in a brief postcript. Graphic designers and photographers are not included and women artists overlooked, though Evelyn Dunbar, Laura Knight, Ethel Gabain, Evelyn Gibbs and Eve Sheldon-Williams all produced interesting work. It is a shame, too, to ignore Pat Carpenter's satirical drawings and the cartoons by James Boswell and James Holland. Moreover, emphasis on select individuals detracts from general issues. The WAAC's secretary, E. M. O'R. Dickey, was second only to Clark in insisting on the need to go for artistic merit: the Air Ministry, however, wanted illustrational accuracy and preferred the glacially photographic productions of Frank Wootton to Paul Nash's affective but technically inaccurate aeroplanes. Whereas in the previous war the Canadian War Memorial Fund had insisted on "a balance . . . between the historical and aesthetic aspects of the project", much 1939–45 war art fell into one camp or the other. Alan Ross, following Clark and Dickey, favours the artistic, but one could argue that Charles Cundall's *Dunkirk* (not illustrated) is, in terms of documentary realism, as successful as Paul Nash's more symbolist *Totes meer*.

Perhaps it is the absence of witnessed suffering that makes this book seem like a mere footnote to the history of World War Two. As with Vietnam and its indelible image of the naked child, sprayed with napalm and fleeing along a road, the most dramatic *visual products to emerge from the* 1939–45 war were photographs, in particular those of Belsen, Buchenwald and other concentration camps. If any visual documents deepened war consciousness it was these. By comparison, much that is illustrated here stops at the level of reportage.



"Wings" (1940), a watercolour by Raymond McGrath reproduced from the book reviewed here.

Solo performance

Carol Zemel

A.M. and RENILDE HAMMACHER
Van Gogh: A Documentary Biography
240pp with 232 illustrations, 48 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £16.
0 500 01282 2

A close-up, as any movie-goer instinctively knows, promises both intimacy and the truth. With a detail of one of van Gogh's forty self-portraits staring from its jacket, A.M. and Renilde Hammacher's "documentary biography" makes this double pledge. The book consists mainly of lengthy quotations from van Gogh's letters, and each chapter is followed by its own pictorial section. The authors limit their contribution to editorial selection, and to brief bridging paragraphs which alert us to various artistic and personal issues, and very occasionally offer discussion and analysis.

The documentary method brings some new information to light. Letters exchanged within the family, for example, tell of early parental concern at van Gogh's social behaviour and mental health, and even an attempt to have him committed to a hospital in Utrecht. The idealized picture of Theo van Gogh as a model of unstinting support is tempered and there are hints of the complexities and ambivalence pervading the brothers' intimacy.

The main voice we hear, however, is van Gogh's. And despite his dogged seriousness, it is not an uninteresting one. With the three-volume 1958 edition of the complete letters now out of print, the chief value of this book lies in the considerable chunk of the correspondence it presents. But as biography, the method has its pitfalls. No matter how rich and varied their content, these letters, unlike diaries, do not really narrate van Gogh's life. Even as art historical texts, they introduce and discuss but do not consistently explain the many complex issues he addressed in his art. The Hammachers insist, however, on van Gogh telling his own tale. The approach most obviously falters in the Paris chapter, when the letters to Theo stop. This is disappointing, for in 1886–87 van Gogh was very much the right *man in the right* place at the right time. He moved in avant-garde circles that included Signac, Laurtec, Bernard and Gauguin, and he was open to, and took advantage of, a bewildering array of artistic ideologies and arguments. In effect, the authors acknowledge this when they describe the Paris work as a "more direct reflection of the vibrant, vital environment of painters who were roughly his contemporaries".

For much of the book, van Gogh is virtually alone at centre stage. Contemporaries and colleagues move on and off in secondary roles. Signac is the conduit to Impressionism and Seurat (rather than to neo-industrial, proletarian Paris); *Gauguin brings* "inflammatory material" to fuel the breakdown at Arles, and the impact on van Gogh of Michelet's books on modern women and love is reduced to a single motif, the so-called "woman-in-black", which the authors link to tiny figures in van Gogh's Dutch *works, and which they characterize* as an obsessive projection of his unrequited early loves. As with so much else, once noted, the issue is dropped. This reticence is especially frustrating when we are alerted to such important issues as van Gogh's symbolic language of colour, his distinctive synthesis of realist and symbolist ideas, his use of Japanese prints, and his interest while in Arles in Giotto, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.

If the authors refuse discussion, they nevertheless rely on the notion of an inner "creative urge" to explain van Gogh's personality and career. *Everything, from style to suicide,* is drawn under this sheltering umbrella. They find it "extraordinary" for example, that van Gogh "did not discover his artistic vocation until his twenty-eighth year", but they do not consider the factors that might have caused this late start. Van Gogh was an artist, it seems, whether he knew it or not, and all events in his life become repressions, sublimations, or, finally, expressions of his nature and its creative force. Thus, a journey to Courrières in 1880 after his failure as an evangelist is not only "a moment of truth", but also "an awakening of that power which had been blocked for years but was now in process of transformation, as if by miracle, into a will to create". As if by miracle? Was van Gogh's career really so guided by inner inevitability or divine accident? This "inner need" takes on a more ominous character in the later part of van Gogh's life as it binds the authors *to a definition of his psychological* destiny although they acknowledge the complexity of such controversial events as his breakdown and suicide.

What is pointedly missing from this book is thorough analysis of van Gogh's work. Together with this programme of inner necessity is a determination to see a progressive *modernist* abstraction in van Gogh's art. For example, the commentary on the 1887 portrait of "The Italian Woman with Carnations ("La Segatori") tells us that "we can easily forget the sitter", as well as the impact of folk art, Japan, Monticelli and Guillaumin. The authors prefer to *describe the work* as a "*modern and* greatly intensified symphonic structure of contrasting coloured brush strokes . . .". This it may be. But by ignoring the subject and its sources, we are forced to jettison the project of van Gogh's portraitures: his professed desire to picture and eternalize the face of modern humanity (cf letters to Bernard no 18, to Theo no 535). Wrenched loose of its cultural moorings, the painting is reduced to a purely stylistic victory.

As his letters demonstrate clearly, van Gogh's life was a crowded arena, and his pictures engage the pressing concerns and the values of his time. This documentary biography is committed to the opposite point of view. The singularity of van Gogh's genius remains intact here. As this book would have it, it was a lonely stage, and ultimately a one-man show.

The Tate Gallery: Illustrated Biennial Report 1980–82 (126pp. Available from The Tate Gallery Publications Department, Millbank, London SW1P 4RG £3. 0 905005 34 1) contains a chapter on the Clore Gallery, designed by James Stirling to house the Turner Bequest, which will open in the summer of 1985, a short chapter on the excellent new coffee shop designed by Jeremy Dixon, and a chapter on the two tent pavilions which are situated to the left of the main entrance and house the *Paint and Painting* exhibition studio and a summer coffee house. Sections are included on the archive, the conservation department, education, the information department, exhibitions held during 1980–82, the library, the photographic department, the publication department and an account of the activities of The Friends of the Tate Gallery during 1980–82. Acquisitions for both the Historic British Collection and the Modern Collection are listed: among these are Charles Collins's "Lobster on a Delft Dish", 1738, Constable's "Brightwell Church and Village", 1815, Marcel Duchamp's "Coffee Mill", 1911, Salvador Dali's "Lobster Telephone", 1936 and Leger's "The Acrobat and his Partner", 1948, reproduced in colour; black-and-white illustrations include William Blake's "Every Man Gave Him Also a Piece of Money", 1821, and Brancusi's "Head' c. 1919–23.

In the arkyards

Douglas Dunn

TOM GALLACHER
Apprentice
156pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10997 3

Over the last fifteen or so years Tom Gallacher's reputation as a playwright has been that of a steadfastly non-parochial craftsman. It comes as a surprise that his first book of stories should be set in the Greenock shipyards ("arkyards", as a poet from Greenock, W.S. Graham, calls them).

Billy Thompson, the narrator of these five stories, is a middle-class Englishman recollecting his five years as an engineering apprentice in the 1950s in Greenock. Twenty-five years later he reads Norman MacCaig's poetry and is successful enough as an engineer to travel to Scotland by first-class sleeper. He is an exile from the place without being local. (He is as much of an outsider as the artist who painted the book's dust jacket, and who has surrealistically plonked a street of Northern English redbrick on Clydeside.) It is an interesting device in the Scottish context, avoiding as it does an exclusively native drama of the past and the present, and permitting Billy to explain the psychology and humour of a place whose citizens are as well understood by the rest of Britain as the Indians of Amazonia.

The emphases, cadences and structure of Gallacher's dialogue coincide remarkably well with the psychology of the people he describes. An unfortunate result is that Billy's plain English speech seems bland and prissy by comparison. There are problems in writing down the speech of the West of Scotland which Gallacher has not solved, and it is beginning to look as if urban Scots *patois* is a dramatist's idiom whose orthography evades print. In Greenock, "doesn't", or "does not" (though some people *do say these, of course*) is likely to become "disnae" or something like it. But that first vowel is illusory. In real speech it gets lost, or swallowed, or changed. Were it not that too many commas for missed vowels would look unreadable, unnecessarily difficult or pedantic, the spelling of the word ought to be "d's'nae". But why the literary "ae". and not just plain "y"? To some, these points will seem fussy and nit-picking; but there is a way in which the subject is genuinely controversial. The sound of speech can express more than place or social origin, but temperament as well. "Fur" for "for", "yer" for "your" and "ye" for "you" imply meaner sounds *than those of the reality in which they* are spoken. Those conspicuous, deeper, broader vowels can be associated with anger and violence in the voice.

The bold eventfulness of Gallacher's stories should leave us in no doubt that these are far from being "slice of life" tales. For example, Elsie, the natural soprano whose career Billy tries to get under way in "Perfect Pitch", would *have had some chance of getting her* voice heard in Greenock, a city with a tradition of choral singing – sentimental and religious, but singing for all that. Gallacher's intention has been to write about a Scottish syndrome in which local priorities and states of mind thwart or submerge the talented. But his narrative is too bold for a reality that is subtle, intuitive and imprecise. It is a pity, for in "Perfect Pitch" he writes wonderfully about Scottish wooing. A similar criticism could be levelled at "Portrait of Isa Mulvenny" in which delightful details are marred by the melodrama of the larger design. Isa's husband, for example, a champion cross-country runner (although, by his mid-thirties, he must have been well past his best) is subjected with grinding predictability to a story-writer's interventionist thuggery – paralysis from the waist down.

A dramatizing imagination in these stories has transmuted ideas and characters from what I suppose is or was experience, but the demands of eventfulness have led Gallacher's story-making away from credibility and realism. Some slips in local accuracy lead me to suspect his experience as either second-hand or distant in the memory. A bus from Glasgow to Greenock, for example, is said to go by way of Erskine, which would have involved a detour by B roads (turn right at the Western SMT Bus Depot) or a crossing of the old Erskine Ferry, both routes somewhat indirect. *When Billy takes Elsie to Glasgow in* the hope of enrolling her in the Academy of Music they are said to change buses after arriving from Greenock and then make their way by an exhausting trek up Buchanan Street. A sensible bus from Greenock would have taken them to St Enoch's Square (in these days) from which the institution they visited is a mere five minutes walk (and not much more from Central Station).

It is a serious matter when good writing, memorable characters and good intentions are marred by a rollicking exaggeration of event and drama. Matricide and madness, the irrational symbolism of grief (in "A Friend of Dosser Farr"), drink, crime and gambling all play their part in the passions and tragedies Billy describes. Some Scottish readers may resent the fact that it is he, a self-confessed dilettante of both work and life, who controls the larger meaning of the stories – that these people are, or were, trapped in their resolute unwillingness to change or take the initiative on their own behalf.

Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

ERNEST WEBSTER
The Venetian Spy-Glass
159pp. Hale. £6.95.
0 7090 0671 3

Captain Benni Soldano of Italian State Security is sent up from Rome to Venice to look after the arrangements for an EEC/NATO meeting and, in passing, to look into some violations of the border with Yugoslavia. Story slightly thin, but the Venetian atmosphere is pleasant and well-observed.

S. F. X. DEAN
Such Pretty Toys
223pp. Collins. £6.95.
0 00 231799 0

College professor of English Neil Kelly is about to take off for a sabbatical in England to get over the murder of his intended – see S. F. X. Dean's previous novel, *By Frequent Anguish* – when he learns from the CIA that two of his best friends have been blown up by a bomb in a jack-in-the-box. He flies down to New Mexico and gets all tied up with the FBI, CIA, terrorists, and mixed up kids. Too many ingredients make for a bumpy plot and an uneasy read, but there are good bits here and there. If Kelly can make it to Devon, perhaps his author can get back to the simplicity and ease of the previous book.

PETER FOX
Kensington Close
222pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 34559 2

Former Hong Kong policeman Jack Lamarre, now with Scotland Yard, assisted by dishy Detective Sergeant Alison Prendergast, is given the job of finding the homicidal maniac who announces each of his killings with an abstruse crossword clue. Some good ideas and nice details – especially of postgraduate student life in a *department of mathematics* – but the whole is blurred by a slapdash, impressionistic narrative method and a rather sloppy ending.

LESLIE CHARTERIS
The Fantastic Saint
Edited by Martin Harry Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh.
180pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £6.95.
0 340 271949

What could be nicer than a trip down memory lane with Simon Templar? In these six stories, written between 1932 and 1959, the promise of the title is fulfilled by two eccentric inventors, one lunatic biologist, a millionaire investigator of the paranormal, the inhabitant of a nightmare, and the Loch Ness monster. All good clean fun, with not a *double entendre* or a dirty word in sight. And the collection is edited by two American university professors, one of whom has written an introduction. In other words, the fate *the Saint has been battling against* for the last fifty years has finally overtaken him: he's made it through into respectability.

CHRISTOPHER HYDE
The Icarus Seal
318pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 25563 5

Freelance journalist Peter Coffin sets off in search of his friend Sam Underwood, who has vanished together with an entire DC 10 charter flight bound from London to Toronto. His quest takes him to London, Paris, New York, Montreal and Labrador; he picks up Sam's beautiful sister Georgina *en route*, and attracts the attention of a lot of very nasty heavies who *don't like him meddling into their* business. It's a rather old-fashioned book in some respects: between two pages Pete turns from a normal man into a kind of Superman clone, and the villains, like the late lamented Carl Peterson, keep putting off – for no good reason at all – his execution when he is in their hands. But there's no denying that the story has a great deal of narrative zip, right through to the less than plausible dénouement. Which is a good thing for the author, because he's packed his serious intent into two short appendixes, and the momentum acquired *from the narrative takes one* into and through these before one has noticed.

FREDA BREAM
The Vicar Done It
160pp. Hale. £6.95.
0 709 0722 1

New Zealand clergyman Jabal Jarrett is persuaded by a policeman friend to doff his clerical collar and walk the Milford Track – "the finest walk in the world" – under a false name in the hope of identifying a minor English criminal. It could lead to misunderstandings and, by golly, it does. Unassuming and far from unamusing story, with little crime but a great deal of good scenery.

SIMON BRETT
Murder in the Title
191pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0 575 03266 9

Charles Paris, Simon Brett's out-at-elbows actor, has sunk to a new low: playing a corpse in a murder mystery at a provincial rep. But it's a role that allows him plenty of time for thought and amateur detection when things start going wrong in the Regent Theatre, Rugland Spa, Herefordshire. Another one of Mr Brett's pleasing entertainments: *undemanding, well-written and neatly put together.*

MARGARET HINXMAN
The Corpse Now Arriving
159pp. Quintin. £6.50.
0 00 231333 2

Blowsy middle-aged woman falls to her death from a carriage of the 19.32 *Victoria to Lymhampton train.* It's obviously a case of too much gin and not enough care, but journalist Kit Morley, who was earlier talking to the woman, has her suspicions and follows them up. Modest, understated story with a solid background and credible chracters.

MICHAEL INNES
Appleby and Honeybath
155pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0 575 03248 0

What is the point, Michael Innes must have thought, of artificially keeping two characters apart, who in real life would have been more likely to meet each other than not? So, in his latest book, the inquisitive artist Honeybath *and the retired policeman Appleby* join forces to look into the mystery of the corpse that has vanished from the library of Grinton Hall. Light, urbane entertainment with – as is usual – a good collection of eccentrics ranging from the *philistine squire* of Grinton to his scholarly butler.

CLIVE EGLETON
The Russian Enigma
241pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 28508 7

The smart thing nowadays with spy stories is, apparently, to set them in the recent past, rather than in the present. In *The Russian Enigma* Clive Egleton follows the trend and goes back to 1962, when Khrushchev is thinking of putting missiles into Cuba and the body of a British double agent is found on a beach near Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight. This is a solidly built story, set up with an impeccable detailed background. The pace is slow at the outset, but quickens up as the scene switches to the United States, and the book ends with an impressive bang. And a neat double-take.

Toughs and moralists

James Campbell

WILLIAM MCILVANNEY
Docherty
324pp. Edinburgh: Mainstream. £7.95.
0 906391 36 9

WILLIAM MCILVANNEY
The Papers of Tony Veitch
254pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 22907 1

"Rough voices, drunken songs of Ireland's suffering in Scottish accents, swear-words in the street." The *characters in Docherty possess a small* but personal lexicon. In the West of Scotland mining town where they live, their rough voices are the only things they have with which to alert an otherwise indifferent world to their existence. They will inherit nothing, and leave nothing behind them, except a few songs and their own community in the High Street, which is described on page one of this novel as a "hell".

Docherty, which won a Whitbread Award when first published in 1975, is an intense drama of a pit-boiler [illegible] family rivalry, birth, death, unwanted pregnancy, war and catastrophe – except a plot. William McIlvanney is too serious to admit an artifinality of which he proves himself quite capable in his thriller-writing. In *Docherty*, he means to speak not about his characters but *for* them. This novel is the testament of a warrior who survived to tell the tale.

It begins in 1903, when Tam Docherty's wife is giving birth to her third son and it ends with a funeral in the early 1920s. Throughout, the author's evocation of the shape and substance of the community, and the family's place within it, is rendered with great authenticity. Yet, for all the anecdote and incident, all the legend surrounding "wee Tam", there are few occasions when the story moves with its own momentum. William McIlvanney has smothered his characters with love so that at times we have difficulty seeing them.

The exception to this is Tam Docherty himself, a miner and pillar of both his family and the immediate community, who commands the respect of high and low, for his honesty and generosity as much as for his fighting abilities. Nine-tenths of him accepts his lot with all its hardships, but the remaining fraction nurses a hope of better things – for his children if not himself – and this becomes first a dream, and finally a crippling illusion. Docherty's fighting spirit survives him, *although it demands the greatest* sacrifice of all.

If this novel's most impressive feature is its rendering of "rough voices", it is also through voices that it comes into a peculiar conflict with itself. *Docherty* is written in two entirely different vernaculars – Tam Docherty's speech and William McIlvanney's commentary – which would not recognize each other if they *passed in the street. This technique, of* the author taking ten sentences for every one spoken by his characters, is complicated by the fact that McIlvanney, when not writing dialogue, is a writer with a single register: in poetry, journalism and fiction, he tends to write – and more to the point, to overwrite – in the same dazzling fashion. There is an unwillingness in all he does to sacrifice his attention-seeking style to the subject, it supposedly attends. In *Docherty*, he writes about his characters in a language they would not understand:

> Only Conn remained the same, the ignorance of his youth an exemption. His life obedient to an older rhythm that nothing seemed able to interrupt. They informed him with that adult nostalgia for their own childhood which tends to make the childhood of others mythic. The small pulse of his activities became the centre of the family, like the heart of a hibernating animal. The same questions and answers were litanised into their evening conversations: "Whit's he been up the noo?" "He's an awfu' boay." "Whaur's the wee yin?"

In the end the characters in *Docherty*, like the characters in Dickens's *Hard Times* whom they often resemble, may be suffering from an excess of nobility. Aware of this trap and the sentimentality it reeks of, the author has swerved to avoid it by including a specifically Scottish West coast characteristic: violence. I am worried that McIlvanney enjoys his characters' violent encounters more than a conscientious novelist should; he displays an unwholesome relish for a face transformed to "a bloody pulp".

The same suspicion is prompted more than once by *The Papers of Tony Veitch*, a sequel to the earlier crime story, *Laidlaw*. Torn between the toughs and the moralists in his books, McIlvanney has bridged the dilemma by creating characters who are philosopher-hardmen: Tam Docherty, in his own way, is one, and Detective Inspector Laidlaw is another. He reads Scott Fitzgerald and Kierkegaard with one hand and disarms Glasgow's fiercest crooks with the other, occasionally delivering a moral homily while he's about it. Laidlaw loves pure justice more than the ceremony of the law, but he takes himself too seriously, and this book – hingeing on the *discovery of the truth about Tony* Veitch – is damaged by the lack of a good reason why Laidlaw should be interested in him at all, other than his love for all mankind.

As in *Laidlaw*, the pace is fast, the path strewn with verbal fireworks: the best sections are those featuring Glasgow's underworld and its ugly population, which McIlvanney describes with a total absence of condescension. Fans of the earlier book will enjoy it and immediately look forward to the next, but it is eight years since *Docherty*; perhaps its author should sacrifice the glitter which has become his trademark and put his talents to a new test.

Deil have recently reissued three classic thrillers: *Bulldog Drummond* by Sapper (209pp. 0 406 02244 X), *The Mind of Mr J. G. Reeder* by Edgar Wallace (151pp. 0 406 02256 3), and *Castle Gay* by John Buchan (228pp. 0 406 02242 3). The book are £2.50 each.

T. E. Lawrence and Louis Massignon

Albert Hourani

A photograph of the Allied entry into Jerusalem on December 11, 1917 (see overleaf) shows, among the tall British officers with an air of confident authority, the small figure of T. E. Lawrence with *downcast eyes*, and, close to him, that of a French officer, erect and slim, his eyes staring ahead as if seeing, beyond the buildings which lead down from the Jaffa Gate towards the Holy Sepulchre and the Dome of the Rock, a vision of another Jerusalem.

The figure is that of Louis Massignon, assistant political officer attached to the mission of Georges Picot, French *High Commissioner for* the occupied territories in Palestine and Syria. He was then thirty-four years old, Lawrence was twenty-nine. Their meeting in Jerusalem marked the end of a brief moment in which the lives of two unusual lives crossed one another. Lawrence was in the middle of the adventure which was to leave an ambiguous mark on the history of his time; Massignon was already known to the learned world as an Arabic scholar of unusual gifts, and had joined the *Mission Picot* after service at the Dardanelles and in Macedonia. They had first met in August 1917 at the Arab Bureau in Cairo; there was a plan to attach *Massignon to the* "Arab Legion", a force composed of Arabs who had rallied to the Sharif Husayn's revolt, which was being trained near Ismailia by British and French instructors.

There is no reference in Lawrence's published works to this meeting; his wide interests did not extend far into the history or culture of the Arabs, and the name of Massignon perhaps meant little to him then or later. To the French in the Near East, however, the name of Lawrence was beginning to be well known. At about the same time the French military attaché in Cairo, de Saint-Quentin, a diplomat and a man *of perception and* judgment, called him "probably the most striking figure of the British army or administration in the East", a man whose very light eyes were lit up by the intensity of his thought, and who gave a profound impression of energy and intelligence. In an article written towards the end of his life, Massignon described him in not very different terms:

> I saw with surprise an Englishman who was still very young, so free from all conventions, almost an outlaw, but so discreet, at the same time sweet and bitter, with the timidity of a young girl, and then with harsh intonations, in a low voice, like those of a prisoner.

In his article, Massignon claimed that it had been the intention of GHQ to attach him together with Lawrence to the northern Arab army under Faysal, which was to operate on the east flank of Allenby's army, but that Lawrence had threatened to resign if a Frenchman were appointed who could challenge his own ascendancy over Faysal; a professional soldier, Pisani, was therefore appointed in his stead. It may be that research in British or French archives will confirm this version of what happened, but until then it should be treated with caution, for one of the traits which the two men shared was a powerful imagination which could impose its own order on the remembered events of their lives. Massignon was certainly haunted – in a long life constantly meditated upon, with an awareness of doors opened but never entered – by the thought of a destiny which might have been his; but also by the thought that it would have been a false one. On the morning of the entry into Jerusalem, he felt as Lawrence opened his heart and expressed his "disgust" at having been dragged to the Arabs in revolt, with whom we were allied, in order to use them just then abandon them". Again, this memory *may* or may not be accurate, but before the end Lawrence did have such a sense of having been placed in a situation with no honest way out. He was a feeling which echoed an echo in Massignon, who represented himself and his fellow-subjects for "our secular rage to understand, to conquer, to possess", the sheen of sacred hospitality. After lay the "City of the Dead", where teachers and saints as well as rulers were buried; in a famous article, he was later to commemorate their tombs, and the "chain of witnesses" which was for him the real history of Islam.

For both of them, too, the Arab East was the place of some experience so deep and challenging as to have revealed their true selves and the orientation of their lives. For Lawrence, it was the total experience of the "Arab revolt": the vividness of the adventure, shot through as it was with the sense of being in a false position, increased his loneliness. The symbolic movement was that day in November 1917 at Deraa when, according to his own account, he was imprisoned, beaten and abused by Turks, and "the citadel of my integrity had been irrevocably lost". In the life of Massignon the crisis had come earlier, in May 1908 when – according to his own account, many times repeated – he had been arrested as a spy while on an archaeological *expedition in Iraq*, then beaten and threatened with execution. He had tried to commit suicide "by sacred horror of myself", lost consciousness, then suddenly awoken to be aware of the presence of a Stranger "who took me just as I was, on the day of his Anger, inert in his hands like the gecko of the sands": "sudden awakening, the eyes closed before the inner fire, which judges me and burns my heart, certainty of a Presence pure, ineffable, creative, suspending my condemnation through the prayers of invisible beings, visitors of my prison, of which the names strike my thought"; those "invisible beings" included persons *known to him, and some from the past*, of whose intercession he was conscious at that moment.

Once more, it is necessary to be cautious. Some writers on Lawrence have doubted whether the incident at Deraa ever took place. Meinertzhagen, not a very reliable writer, said that the story was false; Bernard Shaw and his wife, both more reliable and more charitable, said much the same; and Mrs Shaw called him an "infernal liar". It may be to this episode that Lawrence refers when he says that, at one point in *Seven Pillars*, "I funked the distinct truth, and wrote it obliquely." Similarly, there is *something a little unconvincing about a* French citizen being threatened with execution at that moment in Ottoman history. Reports by the French consul in Baghdad and the captain and doctor of the river-steamer on which Massignon was travelling are said to be silent about any such threat or sentence; a few hours later he came down with malaria, and it may be that fever affected his view of what was happening around him. It does not much matter; in however imaginative a form, both men were trying to describe some decisive confrontation with themselves. If not at Deraa then elsewhere, Lawrence knew that the *citadel of his integrity had been lost*; in prison or in the grip of fever, Massignon experienced the horror of himself and the incursion of grace.

To both men, from now onwards, *this was the summons to find some kind* of order in the chaos of life. For Lawrence there was no Stranger, no eruption of another life into his. The rigours of an evangelical boyhood seem to have left in him no sense of an eternal order breaking into the temporal, only a distaste for the clergy: "I wish these black-coated apes could once see the light with which they shine." Yet he ardently wished for "that vision of the wholeness of life", which was "not a visitor to me, but always there". Whatever order his life could hold would have to be imposed from within, himself, but this was his problem. His own explanations of himself are always the best. He was aware of a dangerous combination between a will of exceptional power and the lack of a stable directing purpose: "I saw myself a danger to ordinary men, with such capacity going rudderless at their disposal"; "I haven't the impulse and the conviction to fill what I know to be my power of moulding men and things."

The revelation of this tragic disharmony between will and purpose is what his Eastern adventure ultimately meant to him. He had believed in the Arab movement, "not finally . . . but in its time and place", and therefore he had been able to "write my will upon the sky in stars"; but before it ended he no longer believed in it, or in Britain's role in it, *or in his own role, and in some deeper* sense this was the citadel of his integrity which was lost.

Not all was lost, however. Deeper than anything else in him was the literary impulse, the desire to transmute all experience into words, and even to shape that experience in the light of literary models. When he first went to the Near East his mind was already formed by books read during his school and student years in Oxford: Homer, Icelandic sagas, medieval French romances, William Morris. He aimed at preparing himself for an Arabian journey from which another *Arabia Deserta* might come. Then the war offered him an epic subject; after it was over, he no longer believed in what he had done, but he could still make literature out of it. This was to be his guiding star for the next decade, until *Seven Pillars* was finished. Then the same question posed itself once more: in the end, did he believe in what he had done? His verdict on his own book is harsh, but probably just; it was "built up of hints from other books, full of these echoes to enrich or side-track or repeat my motives"; "the echoes of Oxford and academic respectability of my prose".

The subtitle of *Seven Pillars* is *A Triumph*, and whether this is taken to refer to the exploits or to the book itself, Lawrence uses it with conscious irony. Both, in his view, were failures, because both were attempts to solve a problem which was insoluble, in the terms in which he posed it: by an effort of will, how could he escape from the tyranny of will? In the famous chapter of self-analysis in *Seven Pillars*, it is perhaps significant that he always writes Will with a capital W, as if it were a separate being. (It may be to this chapter that he is referring when he speaks of writing about something not directly but obliquely: in what he says about Will, it is possible to catch overtones of a feared and insistent sexuality.)

In his last phase, he tried to subject himself to an order not of his own making but willingly accepted, and to acquire spiritual release through a "disciplined and surrendered life", to quote a perceptive critic. His model of human behaviour, in these last years, was Thomas Hardy, fulfilled, detached *from the world, all passion spent*: "so pale, so quiet, so refined into an essence. . . .There is an unbelievable dignity and ripeness about Hardy: he is waiting so tranquilly for death, without a desire or ambition left in his spirit." (*Whether this is the true Hardy is* irrelevant.) In the last letters of Lawrence's life there is something of this peace, a turning away from all efforts to impress others or impose himself upon the world. It is not in defeat but perhaps with a kind of satisfaction that he writes, five days before his death, that "there is something broken in the works . . .my will, I think".

To Massignon the problem appeared in other, one might say in precisely opposite terms. The Stranger, who had held him in his hands on the day of his Anger, would henceforth be the pole of his life, to be sought and loved not by an act of pure will, but by a total surrender: by purification from sin, and then renunciation of the joys of the world, it might be hoped to attain to *that reality which had revealed itself,*

gratuitously, in a moment of vision. By what path to approach that goal is the main subject of the correspondence between him and the poet Paul Claudel, which began in August 1908, soon after the crisis in Iraq. The letters revolve around the choice which Massignon saw himself compelled to make: to turn his back on the world, become a priest, and accept Charles de Foucauld's invitation to join him in a life of prayer and solitude in the Sahara, or to pursue the vocation of a scholar in the world.

The correspondence is between two men of very different temperaments. For Massignon, the world is a desert illuminated by rays from the Eternal; for Claudel, all is balanced and symmetrical, having its own order and beauty, ravaged by sin like a building struck by lightning, but restored by divine grace. Each man must find his proper place in the structure and accept the limitations of that place, and in the end there are only two kinds of order between which to choose, that of marriage and that of priesthood; a man who has received neither of them is imperfect, his powers will be dissipated. Claudel was clearly fascinated by the personality of Massignon, and something which the other told him called back a memory of that love-affair withich is reflected in his *Partage de Midi*: "these terrible confidences which you have given me and which find an echo in my heart" remind him of "the horrible adventure where I just missed losing my soul and my life".

It was not only a memory, but some sense of a missed vocation which led him to urge upon Massignon the vocation of priesthood: "I consider my own life as a life wasted"; "the taste for art has prevented me from having that terrible simplicity of intention without which there is no intimate friendship with God"; "when we have written some articles, composed like me some plays full of artificial sentiments, *quid hoc ad aeternitatem?*" Massignon's conversion was a sign that something special was demanded of him: "God has rescued you by a miracle from the death of the body and the soul. . . . You belong to Him and not to yourself."

There was that in Massignon's nature which inclined him in the same direction. He was aware of those forces in himself which could lead to "the death of the body and the soul"; the conversion in Iraq had come, he tells us, at the end of a period of "violent escapades, disguised as a fellah, among outlaws". For him, earthly beauty was a temptation:

> there are two beauties in this world, and it is necessary to destroy the first in oneself in order to have the purity of regard which alone permits one to become the second.

He declared himself to be "paralysed by the horror of myself and the incapacity to love others purely".

In the end, however, the decision went the otherway, and when Massignon tells Claudel that he is to marry and to remain in the world as a scholar, there is a note of regret, however delicately expressed, in Claudel's response:

> I feel only a sentiment of selfish disappointment. I hoped that you would transcend me, and it is hard for me to see you at the same level as myself. . . . I salute your marriage tenderly and call upon you the help of God. You are no longer romantic and interesting, Massignon, but it is a very good thing to be neither the one nor the other.

Perhaps Massignon's choice expressed a conviction that, for him at least, the path of the world was more arduous than that of renunciation, but it sprang also from a sense of some debt which he owed to Arabs and Muslims. His conversion had taken place in the Arab East, the first prayer he was able to say was in Arabic, an Arab family of Baghdad had shown him kindness and hospitality in his hour of need. Whatever the motives, the path once chosen must be followed to the end; in the years when Massignon was writing to Claudel he was in fact finding a way in which the life of the world – in his case that of a scholar studying Arabic manuscripts – could be consecrated to the service of God.

The work in which he faced this problem was his doctoral thesis, virtually finished by 1914 but not published until 1922, on Mansur al-Hallaj, a Sufi teacher executed in Baghdad in 922. He was accused of teaching that the ritual observances of Islam were unnecessary: the Ka'ba at Mecca should be destroyed and a Muslim could make the pilgrimage in his own room, without going to Mecca. Behind this, however, lay the suspicion that he was teaching that, at the end of the mystical way, the separation between man and God could be overcome in a union of essences. Massignon believed these accusations to be false: Hallaj was teaching not the union of substances, but that of love between man and God present in his heart. He was conscious of a special affinity with Hallaj, some of whose words had brought back to him the sense of sin, and then the desire for purity; Hallaj was one of the *intercessors* of whose presence he was aware at the moment of crisis.

The thesis, *La Passion de Hüsayn ibn Mansur Hallaj*, is a very different kind of book from *Seven Pillars*, and yet they have a similarity of intention, although not at the deepest level. In each, a literary artist of high imaginative power achieves a kind of self-knowledge through the depiction of something other than himself; it is spiritual autobiography by implication. This is a perilous task: the artist is working with material which is not wholly malleable; hard facts may resist the efforts of the imagination to impose a unity of form upon them. Many doubts have been cast on Lawrence's interpretation of the "Arab revolt", but it remains a more valuable source for the history of the period than its harsher critics will allow, and a flawed masterpiece of self-revelation. Of the depth and originality of Massignon's scholarship, the extraordinary range of his learning and the quality of his insights, there can be no doubt, but sooner or later it will be necessary for some other scholar not under his spell to look again at the sources for the life and teaching of Hallaj. Nevertheless, the achievement remains: one of the great works of European orientalism, and a permanent monument of French literature.

Had he wished, Massignon could have called it "A Triumph" without the overtones of irony that can be heard in Lawrence's subtitle. *Seven Pillars*

Louis Massignon (centre) and T. E. Lawrence (extreme right) at the moment of the Allied entry into Jerusalem, December 1917.

ends in the total dissolution of the bond between the writer and his subject; the "Arab revolt" goes its own way, and the fragility, even the falsity, of its bases is already clear; the protagonist who is also the observer asks "leave to go away", for him the event is sorrowful and the phrase meaningless. There is no such separation in Massignon's work, rather the opposite; he has discovered and expounded a view of history which creates a link between him and his subject.

The true history of the human world, for him, is not that of the great collectivities, but of the divine work in the interior of each individual grain. The bearers of this work are those human beings who are moving by prayer and sacrifice towards the final goal of life, union with God in love, and who take on themselves the sufferings and imperfections of others, the sinners, the ignorant, the poor and oppressed. The possibility of substitution, of one person accepting a debt to God which others owe, was something he claimed to have learned from the writer Huysmans, whom he had met in adolescence; and who, on his death-bed, had offered his sufferings for Massignon's conversion.

In this community sustained by prayer, there are some who, by the hard way of sin, contrition and purification, have reached a point where their prayers of substitution are of continuing validity. Their acts and words go on echoing after them; the line of their lives is prolonged by their survival in the lives of others. They form that chain of heroic souls, friends of God, which is the central thread of human history. One such was Hallaj, accepting the reproaches of his community, willing to die a martyr, but gradually over the centuries being absorbed into the moral consciousness of the Muslim world, and finally performing his work of substitution in the life of Massignon himself.

No thinker is wholly original, and in this concept of a line of substitutes it is possible to see traces not only of what Huysmans wrote but of ideas current in the French Catholicism of the time, and of a certain "occultism" which was also current, the belief in a hidden reality behind the appearance of things. The concept of a chain of witnesses to the truth, an invisible hierarchy of saints who keep the world on its axis, is an important theme of Sufi writing. Such ideas were used by Massignon in ways which were not without danger, but they formed a structure solid enough and well enough adapted to the needs of his temperament to provide a framework within which he could live, until his death in 1962 at the age of seventy-nine.

No one can say what the old age of Lawrence would have been like. It is possible that, with his temperament of a doer rather than a contemplative, he would have been drawn again into the public life of his country, had he lived beyond 1935 into the harsh years which followed; perhaps once more he would have found himself involved in the temptations of Will, perhaps they had been finally overcome. The image which remains is the last sad one, in the photograph taken as he left the RAF. Massignon's old age, however, is enshrined in the memories of innumerable colleagues, students and friends, and those who saw – with approval or distaste – his public interventions. Passionately desiring to belong to the chain of witnesses and substitutes, not without a longing for martyrdom in the desert, like that of Charles de Foucauld, the meaning of his life had come to be one of prayer and intercession by which he might give back to Muslims something of what he thought he had received from them. In the world of Islam he had known the oneness and greatness of God; the prayers of Christians might give them what Islam could not give, the Incarnation and the Cross; in spite of differences and conflicts, both belonged to the lineage of Abraham. To pray with and for Muslims was the special vocation of the Arabic-speaking eastern churches: this belief was expressed in the community of prayer which he founded, but above all in the most important event of his later life, his ordination as a priest of the Greek Catholic Church, long hoped for, finally achieved with papal consent, kept virtually secret as long as he lived.

From this central core his activities sped in all directions: visiting prisoners, teaching Algerian immigrants, assisting innumerable students, to whom he was always obliging and helpful; practising non-violent protest against the excesses of French colonial rule, under the influence of Gandhi; going on pilgrimages, above all, in later life, to places associated with the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, known both to Christian and Muslim tradition, and taken by him as symbols of the excluded and persecuted, and also of purity of faith.

Couve de Murville has described how, when he was ambassador in Cairo, the "sombre, alert and tense figure of Professor Massignon" would appear in his office from time to time, and in what unexpected directions his talk would move. Most of those who met him in his later life have similar memories, of a man wholly unlike anyone else, at times disconcerting and quite unforgettable: always dressed in black, as if in mourning, emaciated but with an austere beauty, his ravaged face lit up by contrary passions, as if he were the battlefield of good and evil spirits; exquisitely polite, very "vieille France", combining force and sweetness, anger and pity, with such intensity that some who met him could not bear his presence, but most were overwhelmed by a physical sense of the supernatural; always talking, in a flow that took little account of time or place or his interlocutor, bearing witness to his vision of human life, and returning, even on the most unpropitious occasions, to the central moment of his own life, the drama of sin and contrition, and the divine light in the face of the Stranger.

The multi-storey tradition

Hugh Kennedy

R. B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (Editors)

Sana: An Arabian Islamic City

631pp. World of Islam Festival Trust. £60 (available from Scorpion, £95).

[illegible] Sana, a fortified town in the mountains of Yemen, has been a place of importance since pre-Islamic times. Ptolemy called it Uzal and it is said that it was built by Shem, son of Noah, and that it was the city of Uzal, then as now the capital of Yemen. Despite modern development the mansions and towers are still a prominent feature of the skyline of Sana and the city still retains much of the dignity and presence of a traditional Middle Eastern town. Nor is this traditional aspect confined to the appearance of the buildings; it extends to the survival of social organizations, crafts and ways of life. Indeed, until the officers' coup of 1962 Sana was almost the Lhasa of Arabia; remote, ancient and inaccessible.

Since then much has changed. Political revolution, and the amelioration of many Yemenis, to work in other Arab states have allowed foreign influences to flood in and many of the old ways will soon be no more than memories. This new openness has also allowed scholars to record the ancient city before the pace of change makes much of it unrecoverable. *Sana: An Arabian Islamic City* is an ambitious and remarkably successful attempt to provide just such a record. A number of authors have contributed to the volume, among them several Yemenis, but the whole is given a unity not always found in such co-operative enterprises by the two editors who have provided their own complementary expertise, R. B. Serjeant, his vast knowledge of South Arabian language and custom and Ronald Lewcock his training as an architectural historian. Despite the excellence of many of the photographs, this is no coffee-table book. The text is serious and crammed with information, to the extent, at times, of being positively indigestible; but while the casual browser will find some difficulty in absorbing all the facts and vocabulary, the specialist, whether historian, anthropologist or linguist, will be fascinated and intrigued.

After a brief account of the geographical setting the first main section of the book is concerned with the history of the city and it careful, judicious and as clear as is possible given the difficulties of the sources. The next group of chapters discusses the administration of the town and its material value, which are useful so that transactions can be carried out without being overheard. The different crafts have been affected in very different ways by outside influences. Some, like parts of the textile industry, have been virtually wiped out while others, like the traditional building trade and the manufacture of daggers (a surprisingly complex and interesting occupation), have managed to survive.

The traditional architecture of the city is discussed in detail. Naturally there are descriptions of the mosques, including the fullest account published so far of the great mosque, a structure going back to pre-Islamic times – but there are also accounts of the houses, markets and baths. The architecture of Sana has none of the refinement of Cairo or Isfahan but it is, in the best sense, provincial. The forms are sturdy and practical and the decoration spirited and robust. While the mosques are more interesting than beautiful, it is the domestic houses which are the most impressive local buildings. Unlike the houses in the rest of the Muslim world, those in South Arabia and the Yemen are not built around courtyards but are rather tower-houses, often having only two rooms on each floor but extending to five or more storeys. They are ideally suited for life in the city: the thick stone walls keep out the heat while the main reception room, the *mafraj*, is often found on the top floor, where the open windows command wide views over the city and catch the cooling breezes.

One of the most striking features of the book is the photography. Many of the illustrations, largely provided by Lewcock, are extremely beautiful, but the way they are integrated into the text is equally impressive. In the discussions of both private houses and public baths we have full descriptions of the various rooms and their functions, illustrated by relevant line-drawings and photographs. Anyone who knows the Middle East will appreciate the difficulties the photographer must have had in arranging access to such private and sensitive areas. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that we see the interiors not just as lifeless museum pieces but complete with their inhabitants, talking, eating and relaxing. This is especially effective in the case of the baths, where one learns how the building is managed, heated and used; it is improbable that a more complete account of the Middle Eastern *hammām* will ever be available.

In many ways the book has a rather old-fashioned feel. It belongs in the great nineteenth-century tradition of Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* and it has a static, encyclopedic quality, not often found today, while many of the concerns of modern social scientists and anthropologists, like kinship structures and relations between the sexes, are hardly touched on. But this should not be seen as a criticism; much of what is recorded will soon be gone for ever and the richness and the nuances of this old ways will be forgotten. It is fortunate that they should have been recorded by such a knowledgeable and sympathetic team. It is also to be hoped that the publication of this lavish volume will encourage the people of Sana to appreciate the value of their traditions, for the ancient town is so much more efficient as a "machine for living in" than the concrete slums which disfigure so many Middle Eastern cities.

Moaning about meaning

T. O. Beidelman

David Parkin (Editor)

Semantic Anthropology

310pp. Academic Press. £16.20.
0 12 545180 6

In 1982 the British Association of Social Anthropologists held its annual conference at Durham; the topic was "semantic anthropology". This volume comprises sixteen of the papers given at that session, along with a lengthy editorial introduction. The editor notes that "the issues discussed can no longer be said to stem solely from a distinctly British social anthropology", remarking that ten of the papers (nine of them published here) were from scholars at foreign universities. The point is misleading, for all but three of the published papers are by anthropologists trained in Britain, eight being from writers trained or located at Oxford, where Edwin Ardener has exercised considerable influence in promoting this brand of anthropology. From the other side of the Atlantic, the collection seems very British indeed.

The most difficult task facing a reviewer of this collection is reporting what "semantic anthropology" may be. Obviously it is concerned with the comparative study of meaning in different cultures. Most of the writers here also claim that semantic anthropology is concerned with directing and increasing anthropologists' awareness of and reflection upon the ways in which they go about their work, the ways in which they formulate and interpret alien and exotic belief systems. Both views are epitomized in two famous dicta by Evans-Pritchard. The first observes that the central task of cultural anthropology is the art of translation: the difficult skill of trying to understand and convey to others just what alien peoples experience. To do this requires a full appreciation not merely of an alien language but of the *entire physical* and social world in which its speakers dwell. Furthermore, by language is meant not only words but symbols, gestures, and other forms of expression and communication.

The second dictum observes that the only method in cultural anthropology is the comparative method and that is impossible. What Evans-Pritchard means by this is complex, but much of his intent relates to the extraordinarily complex and difficult task of translation in this broader methodological and epistemological sense. This problem is not unique to cultural anthropology; even before Evans-Pritchard, R. G. Collingwood expressed profound concern about comparable problems in doing history. Indeed, such difficulties exist in all social studies as well as in comparative literary and art criticism. Since Evans-Pritchard and Collingwood wrote over a generation ago, one wonders whether "semantic anthropology" proposes anything new.

David Parkin assures us that semantic anthropology "turns to ethnography for its major inspiration", yet few of the present essays bear him out. Many are either general pronouncements or admonishments as to how anthropologists should interpret other cultures. They express concern that we do not vitiate our analyses by ethnocentric interpretations of alien beliefs along our own Western terms. Less than half the essays are particularly concerned with ethnographic material and only two, those by Roy Willis (on naming among the Fipa of Tanzania) and Basil Sansom (on definition and narratives of illness among a group of Australian aborigines), confine themselves to interpretations of a single set of beliefs and behaviour that are sufficiently detailed for us to reach useful understanding of some facet of a society. Even where other papers report data, these are so thin, the conclusions so tentative, shallow or banal, or the account so brief, that the reader gains little stimulation or information.

Truly the life-blood of anthropology is ethnography. Such data have lasting value in providing a record for present and future analyses and comparisons with other societies and many of us continue to reanalyse and supplement such findings collected long before we were born. Ethnography is crucial for another reason also. If we are to collect better data and to develop more refined, critical and imaginative interpretations, those methods are best demonstrated and understood in terms of how anthropologists report and explicate particular ethnography. It is in this sense that the present collection is most disappointing. Too much space is devoted to telling readers how to do fieldwork or what is wrong with anthropologists, and little to getting on with the actual job of doing anthropology. Mark Hobart, an ethnographer of Indonesian society, illustrates some of these difficulties. In a long, rambling essay, significantly entitled "Meaning or Moaning", he recites a litany of doubts and problems regarding how we may surmount our own ethnocentrism in order to understand properly what other peoples mean. In a footnote to this, Hobart remarks that his original paper was too long, so he removed the ethnographic half which illustrated what he was getting at.

I am not, to be sure, suggesting that anthropologists cease self-examination nor am I advocating that they stop seeking new methods for collecting data or for explanation. Yet the surfeit of uneasy pronouncements and recriminations paraded here says less that is useful than could be found in one confident, factually rich ethnographic report. Indeed, the jitters of self-doubt are so manifold that we are even subjected to a tiresome essay on the difficulties of doing decent fieldwork by one who at the time of writing apparently had not yet done any.

Social anthropology hinges on the problem of translating beliefs and values, but these in turn are of little consequence unless related to how people act, how societies work. In that regard Talal Asad's criticism of semantic anthropology as trivial on account of its unconcern with issues of power remains telling. Not only is it true that few of the essays, excepting Willis and Sansom, convey much sense of a larger society in which power, authority, production or other processes are afoot, it is also true that despite a mass of references, most of the authors seem parochial in their awareness of what has been written relevant to the issues at hand. A number of linguists and philosophers are mentioned but few sociologists or psychologists, and even many relevant anthropologists are ignored. It is indicative of these failings that Max Weber's name never appears in the index, that the author attempting to explicate and advocate a specialized study of human body movements ignores Margaret Mead's and Gregory Bateson's pioneer works, as well as Mauss's and Hertz's famous essays (though she surely knows these), or that the writers on meanings of ethnicity display a disturbing ignorance of the vast literature by American anthropologists and sociologists.

Since I received much of my graduate training in cultural anthropology in Britain, I should be sorry if this collection represents the current state of the subject there. Nor do I want to believe that it indicates the current positions of all its contributors, for writers such as Parkin, R. H. Barnes, Willis and Gudeman have all written lucidly and stimulatingly elsewhere. Semantic anthropology appears to have contributed not only to a decline in the acuity of their analytical prowess but even to a muddling of their English. Some of the problems raised are valid, even central to our discipline; the ways of going about trying to deal with them here seem unlikely to lead anywhere but to moaning about meaning, to a failure of analytical nerve, and to an inhibition in recounting useful ethnography.

Aboriginals in adversity

F. G. Bailey

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf

Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival

342pp. University of California Press. £24.
0 520 04315 4

Forty million Indians (a little under 7 per cent of the population) are *adivasis* (aboriginals or "first settlers" – the "tribes" of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf's book). Two generations ago they were easily described: tribals were animists (that is, not adherents of any of India's great religions); their agricultural techniques were simpler than those of the ordinary Hindu or Moslem peasant; they lived in remote forested areas; they spoke a variety of languages, all unwritten, and never the language used for administration; also, unlike the devious Hindu, they were simple, honest and straightforward – in short, one of the several varieties of noble savage which the British were happy to encounter in the course of building and losing their empire.

How does one administer such people? The British answer was "as lightly as possible and certainly not with that impossibly intricate bureaucratic instrument used on the ordinary Indian". There might even be no administration at all beyond an occasional show of force, as in parts of Nagaland (about which von Fürer-Haimendorf wrote a very exciting book in the 1930s, *The Naked Nagas*).

The problem begins when Pax Britannica has tamed tribal ferocity, when markets are set up, roads and jails are built, forests are reserved because the tribal technique of agriculture (slash-and-burn) is destroying a valuable commercial product, and above all when Hindu traders and land-hungry peasants from the plains discover that the ingenuous *adivasi* is easily cheated out of (or bullied off) his land. Then begins a process of internal colonization which, reading von Fürer-Haimendorf's case histories in Central India, comes near to matching in brutality the story of aborigines in other continents.

It is another version of Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*. The *adivasis* lose their land and fall into debt. Their labour and they themselves become a commodity, and their culture, their way of life and their self-respect are destroyed. So what is to be done? No one, at least at the level where policy is made, has wanted to let free-market capitalism run its course. Both the British before 1947 and the Indian Governments afterwards set out to protect the *adivasis*. But, at least in Central India, neither had much success. The policy may be appropriate; but the implementation in many areas is by officials who can be bought (who insist on being bought), and in the event the law gives the *adivasi* little protection against his exploiters. That is the picture, which von Fürer-Haimendorf paints for most of his Gonds and Reddis and Koyas and some other tribes in Andhra Pradesh.

Education does not, apparently, much help. For a variety of reasons the best outcome is nothing more than a small tribal élite of BAs and BAs ("plucked"), employed as teachers and petty functionaries. It is not a population able to manage its own affairs, still less one restored to self-respect through knowledge.

The British had a solution. It was to control the transfer of land and deny ownership to non-tribals. But legal chicanery, the use of force, and the assistance of corrupt officials allowed outsiders easily to penetrate that barrier.

That is half the story and it occupies the first ten chapters of the book (including two by von Fürer-Haimendorf's research assistants) and it concerns Central India. Chapter Eleven provides a surprise. It is about Arunachal Pradesh, on India's North-eastern frontier with China. There, after 1947, with the backing of Nehru and on the advice of the anthropologist Verrier Elwin, the protectionist policy was carried to its extreme. No one who was not an *adivasi* was allowed to enter the area, with, the exception of a small administrative élite. Secondly, money was spent generously on development and education with the result that after little more than thirty years an area once peopled by warlike, feuding tribes is now self-governed and peaceably and efficiently governed, to a large extent, by an indigenous, well-educated and responsibly élite.

There remains a question which has a somewhat depressing answer. Why is the North-eastern frontier treated this way? There are many reasons, but one of them must be that this area is on the frontier with China and it pays the Indian government not to have a disaffected population there. For the same reason – but after much violence – the Nagas too have their own self-governing territory. Along the same line of thinking are to be placed the several references in the book to tribals in the district of Srikakulam, who make the administration work for them and not for the exploiters. They can do so because their participation in the Naxalite violence a decade ago has made others fear them and has restored their respect for themselves.

This is a very interesting book, not so much for the ethnography (von Fürer-Haimendorf has written other books on both regions) but for the problem it discusses (of disadvantaged minorities), for the contrast between the two areas, and above all, for the spectacle of the author's forty and more years of industrious ethnography among – and practical concern for – India's tribal peoples.

Ties and terminology

C. J. Fuller

Ákos Östör, Lina Fruzzetti and Steve Barnett (Editors)

Concepts of Person: Kinship, Caste, and Marriage in India

217pp. Harvard University Press. £28.
0 674 15765 6

A central premise in Louis Dumont's influential work on Indian society is that the unity of India is given primarily by its all-pervasive ideology of hierarchy. However, as Dumont himself has recognized, Indian kinship systems pose severe problems for such a postulate. In particular, there appears to be a fundamental difference between south Indian "Dravidian" systems in which marriage is ideally between close relatives as defined by cross-cousin marriage rules expressed in kinship terminology, and north Indian systems, in which close relatives are usually unmarriable and no positive marriage rules are expressed in the kinship terminology. Dumont's own solution was to argue that a high valuation of affinal relationships is common to all of India, even though it is overtly expressed only in the southern system. Because this argument patently accords quite different significance to northern and southern kinship ideologies, it has been widely criticized as inconsistent and has not been generally accepted. It is out of such dissatisfaction that this book emerges.

One possible method of proceeding is to argue that Dumont's mistake was to treat kinship as a discrete domain constituted by genealogically defined relationships. David Schneider has advocated a "cultural" approach to kinship studies; for him, the central task is interpretation of sets of social relationships as these are understood, as cultural constructs, by the members of a particular society, who may lack any bounded, genealogically defined "kinship" domain. Drawing on Schneider's work, but building too on much of Dumont's general theory of Indian society, Ákos Östör, Lina Fruzzetti and Steve Barnett seek to identify and interpret important cultural constructs in Bengal and Tamilnadu. In particular, they explore the cultural construction of the person: how Bengalis and Tamils understand ties between parent and child, between husband and wife, between members of indigenously defined groupings of caste, kindred, line, etc. Their approach, they argue, avoids imposing upon the data misconceived anthropological notions of genealogical kinship. This in turn permits properly controlled comparisons designed to reveal the structural principles underlying sets of social relationships that were not, from the outset, inaptly categorized as "caste" or "kinship" phenomena.

The great merit of the editors' own two papers, and their introduction and conclusion, is that in them the arguments are systematic and clearly laid out. They can be assessed in the light of other ethnographic data and the theoretical framework is amenable to criticism. Consequently, Östör, Fruzzetti and Barnett here avoid the defects inherent in too many of the Chicago "ethno-sociologists" writings: assertion rather than demonstration, and the lapse into vast and in the end empty generalizations. But there remain two major objections to their approach, both of which have already been voiced by others. (The conference at which the essays in this book were presented was held in 1976, the year in which the editors' paper, "The cultural construction of the person in Bengal and Tamilnadu", was first published in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.) The first objection is that their comparison of "Bengalis" and "Tamils" contains little evidence that their own informants were, in all important respects, representative of these two vast populations. Indeed, evidence to the contrary is considerable. The second objection has to do with a basic problem in the "cultural" approach. By radically separating cultural meaning from social structure, the relation between the two levels is largely ignored, so that we are told next to nothing about how Bengali and Tamil cultural constructs are related to the social groupings that actually exist. None the less, if older styles of analysis are in fact more useful than they believe, the editors do propose a valuable alternative method for tackling the central difficulty in Dumont's analysis of Indian kinship.

The book includes five other papers: by Sylvia Vatuk on Hindi kin terms of address; T. N. Madan on Kashmiri Brahmans' ideology of the householder; Anthony T. Carter on concepts of the person in Maharashtra; R. S. Khare on concepts of the virgin and mother in north India; and Pauline Kolenda on widowhood in an Uttar Pradesh Harijan community. All of them contain excellent and imaginative interpretations of the data. (If should have been mentioned, though, that Madan's essay appeared in a very similar form in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* in 1981.) None of the five authors, however, follows the editors' approach at all closely; some of them, indeed, firmly follow a quite different line. Nor do most of them have very much to say about concepts of the person, as that issue is formulated by the editors.

But the freedom from dogmatism is one of the book's most attractive features, for which the editors must be given credit. *Concepts of Person* makes an important contribution to the understanding of Indian kinship – both northern and southern.

From the heroic to the allegorical

Malcolm Godden

J. R. R. Tolkien
The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays
Edited by Christopher Tolkein
240pp. Allen and Unwin. £9.95.
0 04 8090190

Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode
Edited by Alan Bliss
180pp. Allen and Unwin. £9.95.
0 04 829003 3

The Old English Exodus
Text, Translation and Commentary
Edited by Joan Turville-Petre
85pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £7.95.
0 19 8111770

S. A. J. Bradley
Anglo-Saxon Poetry
559pp. Dent. £10.95 (paperback, £4.95).
0 460 10794 1

Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson
A Guide to Old English: Revised with Texts and Glossary
271pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15 (paperback, £5.95).
0 631 12798 4

J. R. R. Tolkien's reputation as an Anglo-Saxon scholar is high among those who were taught by him. Others have had little to judge him by, and even those who knew him are still heard grumbling that he spent his twenty years in the Oxford chair of Anglo-Saxon and his fourteen years in the chair of English Language writing fairy-stories. Recent excavations in Tolkien's desk go some way to redeem his reputation. The lectures and prefaces in the new collection edited by his son are mostly familiar pieces, including the "monsters and critics" lecture on *Beowulf*, but there is a new and valuable paper on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the lectures on the Old English *Exodus* and on the story of Finn and Hengest have not been seen in print before. Two points become clearer about Tolkien as an Anglo-Saxon scholar: his fondness for story-telling as a form of criticism; and his enthusiasm for the Germanic roots of Anglo-Saxon legend and language.

Tolkien used story as a mode of interpretation in the two pieces on Anglo-Saxon poetry published during his lifetime, the essays on *Beowulf* and *Maldon*, but the lectures on Finn and Hengest (very well edited by Alan Bliss) show a more extensive use of story-making. The stones with which he builds his tale are few and jumbled: a fragment of an Anglo-Saxon lay known as "The Fight at Finnsburgh" preserved only in an unreliable eighteenth-century transcript, and a cryptic and allusive song recited in *Beowulf*. They hint at a tragic conflict in Frisia some time in the Heroic Age. Not much can be pieced together for certain, but it appears that a Danish king Hnaef was visiting his sister's husband Finn, King of the Frisians, with sixty of his warriors, when he was attacked by Finn's followers. Many were killed on both sides, including Hnaef and Finn's son. A peace of sorts was established but when spring came the Danes took sudden revenge on the Frisians, killing Finn and taking his queen and his treasure back to Denmark. Tolkien takes this story, adds to it the scattered occurrences of the same or similar names in other ancient texts and develops his own account of what really happened in Finnsburgh. The crucial figures, in his view, are the Jutes. He places the events around the year 450. The Danes had been steadily pushing into Jutland, dispossessing the earlier inhabitants, and thus there were Jutish exiles at Finn's court, including Garulf, the heir to the Jutish throne. It was these who initiated the attack on Hnaef and his men, stirred up by their old hostility to the Danes and their personal antagonism to another group of Jutes, led by the adventurer Hengest, who had earlier joined forces with the Danes. As the fighting continued round the hall the Frisians were gradually drawn into the attack, but Finn himself may have played no part and was eventually able to establish a truce between the two sides. The surviving Danes sailed home but Hengest and his Jutes stayed behind in the service of Finn. However, the Danes secretly returned with fresh forces, persuaded Hengest to help them and took bloody revenge on Finn, whom they held responsible for the death of Hnaef their king.

The Danish interest in the story, as well as the Beowulf-poet's, comes to an end at this point, but Tolkien goes on. Hengest, he suggests, now lordless once again, collected a fresh band of Jutish warriors and, with his brother Horsa, sailed to Britain to serve with the British king Vortigern. Once again he turned on his host-king and killed him, and then carved himself a kingdom in Kent; his success prompted further incursions by Angles and Saxons, which led in turn to the creation of England. The tragic hero of this drama is Finn, caught up in conflicts not of his own making and destroyed by his own generosity. The Machiavel is Hengest, who appears first in the service of the Danes, the supposed enemies of the Jutes, and thereafter switches allegiances rapidly. But it is the place of the story in the history of nations which Tolkien is keenest to establish. The conditions of heroic conflict are created by Danish expansion into Jutish territory and into Frisian spheres of influence. The suggestive moment in the "Finnsburgh" lay when a young warrior called Garulf is urged not to risk "so precious a life" takes on significance in Tolkien's argument because for him Garulf is the last heir of the Jutish dynasty and with his death in the battle against Hnaef the Jutes as a nation come to an end. Hengest's heroic dilemma (as seen by the Beowulf-poet) acquires an extra significance when Tolkien identifies him with the figure of the same name who appears in legends of the Anglo-Saxon invasions.

It is a powerful story, and when first delivered in 1928 it can have lost nothing from its echoes of recent events, with its picture of two great powers anxious to maintain peace but dragged into ruinous conflict by resentful exiles from smaller nations, pursuing their old vendettas. It is not, admittedly, very plausible. It is difficult to believe in the theory that there were Jutes on both sides of the conflict, or in the role which Tolkien attributes to Finn, standing idly by for five days or more while a battle rages in and around his own hall, between a group of foreigners in his own service and a party of invited guests which includes his own brother-in-law and his young son. The scraps of evidence are forcefully exploited, but they will not really prove, with any degree of conviction, the date or historical context that Tolkien suggests, or his view that the Hengest of the story is the same as the Hengest of the Anglo-Saxon invasions. It is easy to see how the irritations caused by paucity of evidence and the rigorous demands of historical scholarship made the writing of pure fiction a more attractive alternative.

Tolkien on Finn and Hengest is, even so, an exciting detective-story. Tolkien on *Exodus* is a disappointment. His lecture-notes were clearly designed for a very specialized audience and are mainly concerned with establishing a corrected text, a problem now largely overtaken by subsequent editions. The poem does not seem to have excited Tolkien. What was needed was a wide-ranging exploration in exegetical and apocryphal sources, to explain the curious images and allusions in the Anglo-Saxon poet's account of the Israelites' escape from Egypt, but Tolkien attempted very little in this line. Some passing remarks in his essay on *Sir Gawain* suggest that he may have thought such investigation of purely religious ideas rather blasphemous. Whatever the reason in his case, he was in tune with his time. The nineteenth-century search for Germanic paganism buried in Anglo-Saxon poetry may have petered out, but it was still the heroic poetry, and the heroic touches in other poems, that counted for Tolkien's generation.

That particular age has passed. The last two decades have produced the techniques and expertise for analysing Anglo-Saxon religious poetry in as thorough a manner as Tolkien used for Finn and Hengest, and these have now been turned with a vengeance on the heroic poetry too, to find St Paul, St Augustine and Alcuin buried deep. The difference between Tolkien and the new school is in part an assumption about the Anglo-Saxon audience for poetry. Tolkien took it for granted that the original audience for *Beowulf* and the "Finnsburgh" lay knew the full story of the feud and the whole history of the Danes, Jutes, Geats and Swedes, all handed down in oral tradition and heroic song. The new school posits a highly educated set of listeners or readers familiar with the writings of Augustine and Boethius, at least at second hand, and trained to recognize religious allegory at the slightest hint. This in turn involves a revolution in chronology: the old assumption that most of the poetry was early (seventh to ninth century) and in the case of heroic poems drawing on still earlier legends, is necessarily challenged by the new school, since Boethius was probably unknown in England until the end of the ninth century and the training in Augustinian thought by way of vernacular preaching that is posited is unlikely to have been available until the tenth century. Thus the current enthusiasm is a tenth-century date for *Beowulf*, two or three centuries later than the traditional date.

The reversal is perfectly illustrated by the new Everyman anthology of Anglo-Saxon poetry in translation, replacing the old collection by R. K. Gordon which had served for fifty years. The new collection, by S. A. J. Bradley, is a larger one, with more poems, extensive introductions and brief accounts of any poems from the four main codices that are not included, all organized in accordance with manuscript sources rather than genre or date. But the real difference from Gordon is the emphasis on religious poetry and perspectives, with the imposition of a thoroughgoing Augustinianism on the bulk of the poetry. Gordon began his anthology with *Beowulf* and the other heroic poems, moved on to the elegies, love poems and charms, then gave a selection from the religious poetry and ended with the late historical poems *Brunanburgh* and *Maldon*. Bradley reverses the order, giving 300 pages of biblical and hagiographical verse before so much as an elegy appears, and leaving *Beowulf* and the other heroic poems till nearly last. The splendid account of Abraham's battle with the four kings, by far the most inspired part of the early poem on *Genesis* and rightly selected by Gordon to represent that poem, is the part of the poem which is omitted in this collection. In the introductory comments the hand of St Augustine and patristic doctrine lies heavy. Even *Widsith*, that poetic catalogue of the heroes and tribes of the legendary Germanic world, is given an Augustinian frame of reference, and the editor confesses an urge to offer a religious allegory as the key to that strange love-elegy *The Wife's Lament* (mercifully, he resists the urge). The uninitiated reader, perplexed by the new school of interpretation and looking for some contact with reality, will find little help here. That short but delicately allusive poem *Deor* urgently needs the brief account of Weland and Nithhad, Beaduhild and Theodoric, which Gordon had given it, if there is to be any literal understanding at all; all that is offered here is a lengthy parallel with Boethius's arguments about Fate and God. For *The Seafarer* St Paul and St Augustine are provided as keys to the allegory but not the traditional reference to Dorothy Whitelock's parallel with actual Irish ascetics setting out in real boats. The translations themselves are careful and painstakingly accurate, if rather stilted and old-fashioned; Anglo-Saxon warriors still appear with breasts and bosoms ("it is an excellent virtue in a man that he should bind fast his bosom" says the wanderer).

Faced with these shifting sands, the interested beginner would do well to turn to the new version of Bruce Mitchell's *Guide to Old English*. The *Guide* has been around since 1962 and remains the best available introduction to the language, especially for anyone trying to learn it on his own. It does assume a prior knowledge of grammatical terminology such as accusative and subjunctive, but gently explains much else that other grammars take for granted, and is particularly helpful on syntax. The new version has texts and glossary added to make it serve as an introductory reader as well as grammar. The choice of texts could not have been bettered as an introduction to Anglo-Saxon literature and culture: Aelfric on the occupations of peasants, artisans and merchants and on ways of interpreting the Bible; the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle* on the heroic conflict of *Cynewulf and* Cyneheard and the Viking raids around the time of the Battle of Maldon; Bede on the conversion of the English and the poet Caedmon; and King Alfred on education and literacy and on the Gothic invasion of Italy, in matching prose and verse versions. The brief passages of verse by Caedmon and Alfred take the reader to the point of confronting Old English poetry, and the prose texts provide at least a degree of help in resisting some of the more extreme criticisms that will be found. In meeting the needs of the beginner Mitchell and Robinson have got their priorities right. They have so inhibitions about removing linguistic oddities but they faithfully reproduce the content of the texts, and the explanatory comments are sane and helpful.

From the partial to the total

Catherine La Farge

Sandra Ness Ihle
Malory's Grail Quest: Invention and Adaptation in Medieval Prose
[illegible]
[illegible]

Studies of Malory's *Sankgreal* have been complicated not only by the temptation to read text and source simultaneously (a habit C. S. Lewis called eating the raw ingredients of the pudding along with the pudding itself), but also by the modern distaste for sermons. Many critics still see the source, the thirteenth-century *Queste del Saint Graal*, as E. K. Chambers did: "symbolic adventures and still more symbolic visions, with a hermit waiting at every road-side to expound the symbolism in the bitterest detail". Malory has often been praised simply for removing some of the hermits.

Sandra Ness Ihle's approach allows for the two texts' separate concerns and techniques. Borrowing terms from Paul Frankl's architectural studies, she compares the *Queste* to a Gothic structure which creates an effect of "partiality" and mystery. She draws an analogy between Gothic principles of "spatial division", the "smooth flow-of-forces" and "diagonality", and the [illegible] "digressio" and interlace. Malory's *Sankgreal* is then compared to a Romanesque cathedral which Frankl claims, provokes a sense of "totality", completeness, "knowability". This simplarity of effect is traced to Malory's restriction of "*digressio*", of the proliferation of meanings, and of the interlacing of adventures.

Ms Ihle associates these contrasting methods of composition with thematic differences. The *Queste* seeks, for instance, to suggest the ultimate ineffability of the meaning of the Grail; it is "defined peripheratically: [its] essence . . . is its mystery, to identify it specifically is to ignore the diversity of its manifestations and the interpenetration of images attached to it". Malory, by contrast, places the Grail within reach, he prunes back its meanings, stressing its identification with the Eucharist – an institution alized entity accessible not to Galahad alone, but also to a "synfull man of the worlde" like Lancelot. The gradual, incomplete unfolding of allegorical significance in the *Queste* gives way to Malory's more direct assignment of meaning and his emphasis on social values.

[illegible] Erwin Panofsky drew his comparison between Gothic architecture and scholasticism, he claimed for these phenomena a "palpable and hardly accidental concurrence in the purely factual domain of time and place", more than a "mere parallelism" but less specific than "individual influences". The hard facts which he brought to bear may seem insufficient to the sceptical, but at least they offer some contemporary support to a stimulating thesis. Ihle is careful to point that while the *Queste* appeared during the age of the Gothic cathedrals, Malory and the construction of Romanesque buildings are several centuries out of step. But it remains somewhat unclear what her comparisons between the arts are supposed to accomplish. She suggests that similarities between the *Queste* and Gothic style may have some historical logic, but does not develop the point; without resort to concepts of influence, *Zeitgeist* or *mentalité*, or indeed any rigorous theoretical basis, she simply proposes that one "can illuminate the structural aspects of one work of art by means of another".

One might argue that the products of one age resemble those of another because of similarities – social, intellectual or aesthetic – between the two eras. But this is not what Ihle has in mind. References to literary works (let alone other matters) aside from the *Sankgreal* and the *Queste*, are extremely rare; Matthew of Vendôme and Geoffrey of Vinsauf make brief appearances in the text, and Hugh of St Victor and Dante turn up in short footnotes. But these and the naming of rhetorical devices do not suffice to clarify central similarities and differences of tradition. Appeal is made simply to the structures themselves, without any substantial defence of analysing the literary in terms of the visual. Such a defence is needed, for Ihle's comparisons are too lengthy and too often repeated to be taken as incidental metaphors.

There are further problems. Is Romanesque, in some ahistorical sense, the architecture of "totality"? Two eminent twentieth-century art historians, both trained in German universities, forced to leave by the Nazis, and subsequently appointed to positions at Princeton do not agree. Panofsky associates Romanesque with "impenetrability", Gothic with clarity and "totality"; Frankl (and Ihle) associate Romanesque with "totality" and graspability, Gothic with mystery and "partiality".

Finally, attention to Malory's style in sentence level would produce a different description from one based exclusively upon broader outlines of structure and theme; that concentrates on earthly chivalry, Lancelot and brotherhood is scarcely new. Nevertheless, Ihle has given a detailed account of relevant divergences from the source and confirms the reader's sense of these preoccupations as inextricable from narrative form.

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The Games are the thing

Christopher Booker

Lord Killanin
My Olympic Years
288pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
0 436 23340 1

Not the least of the many ironies surrounding the boycott-battered Moscow Olympic Games of 1980 was the background of the central figure in the drama, the President of the International Olympic Committee whose eight-year term of office culminated in the saving of those Games from complete disaster. Even the most Jesuitical of Marxist analysts might have been baffled to account for the "contradiction" that the most doughty opponent of President Carter and Mrs Thatcher in their attempts to scupper the Games was a white-haired Old Etonian hereditary peer, with a wartime record of service in a British armoured brigade. But then of course Lord Killanin was an Irishman, and this would not have been the first time that the anomalies of Irish life defied Marxist analysis.

Lord Killanin has produced a workmanlike rather than inspired account of his years of guiding the Olympic movement through the most fraught period of its history. He became its vice-president in 1968, just after the Mexican government had celebrated its staging of the Olympic Games by shooting down 250 students. He succeeded Avery Brundage as president in the immediate aftermath of the "Munich Massacre", and inherited the growing nightmare of preparing for the 1976 Games in Montreal (perhaps inevitably his chapter on this is headed "Oh God! Oh Montreal!"). Even the chaos and walkouts of 1976 were eventually to pale, however, beside those besetting the 1980 Games after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and inevitably the growing threat to the Olympic movement of the world's political squabbles casts its shadow over a great deal of this book.

Despite so obviously despising politicians (or perhaps one should say American, British and South African politicians in particular, and President Carter above all), Lord Killanin writes much like any politician compiling his memoirs after a life of committee meetings and flights between one set of airport-lounges and international hotels and another. It cannot be said that his story contains many astonishing revelations or profound reflections on the relations between sport and politics. He also affects to despise bureaucracy, but so much of his narrative is taken up with the bureaucratic arrangements of the Olympic movement that he has to preface his book with a three-page guide to the acronyms of the countless sporting bodies which litter his pages – AANOC, AIPS, CNSOF, CONI, COJO (see OCOG), ODEPA (see PASO) – and he begins his acknowledgements with the memorable sentence "This volume was made possible by my former colleagues on the IOC and the IFs, NOCs and OCOGs".

As someone who was in Moscow in 1980, I inevitably looked forward above all to his account of what it was like to be right at the centre of that astonishing, eerie spectacle. It has to be said that Lord Killanin does not tell us very much. Despite casting much contempt on President Carter's undoubted naivety over the boycott campaign, Killanin himself shows an almost hilarious naivety towards the realities of Soviet life. There was one extraordinary meeting in the Kremlin two months before the Games opened when he asked Mr Brezhnev "if he could do something regarding the Afghanistan position to avoid the political destruction of the Games". "Mr Brezhnev gave me a promise to do his very best so that the atmosphere might improve."

Lord Killanin seems to think that the showpiece Kalinin Prospekt is spelled "Kallinin" (presumably by some anagrammatic confusion with his own name) and that its "glass-fronted" shops with their "ever increasing number of consumer goods" could be "anywhere in the world" (which only shows that he cannot have gone into them). There are many such giveaway touches and he seems much more convinced that his hotel rooms and conversations were "bugged" in the United States than in the Soviet Union.

It is all very well to be idealistic about the need to keep sport and the Olympic Games free from political entanglement, and to acclaim the Soviet Union's "mass sports participation philosophy" as being "designed in the way de Coubertin had hoped the Olympic revival would lead the world", but unfortunately idealism requires a solid foundation of unblinkered realism if it is to be anything more than wishful thinking. The fact is that the most successful sporting organization in the world, in terms of medals won at the last three Olympic Games, has been the Soviet "All-Union" sports club known as Dynamo. The sponsors of Dynamo, the richest such organization in the USSR, are the KGB, who also "sponsor" the Gulag Archipelago. Alas, the real world is rather more complicated than simple Irish idealists would sometimes have us believe.

On headlines bent

Richard Boston

Sandy Gall
Don't Worry about the Money Now
[illegible] Hamilton. £8.95.
0 241 10959 0

In his thirty years as a foreign correspondent (first for Reuter's, then ITN) Sandy Gall has sent back from line reports from tight corners all over the world – Suez, Hungary, the Congo of Lumumba and Tshombe, the Six-Day War, Biafra, Uganda (where he spent an extremely unpleasant time in one of Amin's execution cells), Vietnam and the fall of Saigon.

His account of his own experience of so many dramatic happenings is remarkably uninformative about the major events of modern history, since it adds nothing to the headlines Mr Gall was sending back at the time. It does, however, (if, not always intentionally) provide some insight into the workings of foreign correspondents.

So far as narrative structure goes, one chapter of the book is much like another. We usually start with a pent-up Sandy Gall pacing up and down in frustration at some editor who is either too mean or too unimaginative to send him off on the big story of the day. "It's a bloody important story and we damned well ought to be there", Sandy says. On this occasion he happens to be talking about Vietnam, but it might just as well be China or Peru. However, within scarcely more than a paragraph he has overcome such obstacles and it's all over bar the shouting. Sandy has his jabs, gets his visa, packs his bags and soon finds himself in war-torn Kurdistan. Here he meets a lot of other foreign correspondents, and takes a taxi to where the bullets are being fired; [illegible] unexpectedly, the chief is friendly and reassuring [illegible] out of the dust and [illegible] and all our troubles were [illegible] in two taxis, we set off [illegible]

Gall comes from Scotland, but his humour is in stuff he could easily pass off as Englishman. He comes across as a [illegible] decent chap, and he has a good word for almost everyone. [illegible] exceptions, though. Colin [illegible] Tom Stacey is another. [illegible] which a colleague's [illegible] simply not on; not even [illegible] a bubble of journalistic [illegible] And then there's a BBC man whose behaviour was so caddish that Sandy can't even bring himself to name him, being moved to pronounce that he has "never seen anyone try and prevent the opposition from getting to the scene of a major event by such boorish and clumsy means". These are indeed strong words, considering the competition provided by the British army in the way of stopping Sandy from getting his story. In this book the "opposition" is not those who are firing bullets at him: they're just doing their job, which is to provide him with news. No, the real conflicts of our troubled world are between Reuter's and the other press agencies, or between ITN and the BBC. In the same way the point of the story, even when Gall has had many years in which to reflect on what he witnessed, is not what it all meant or means to the country or continent concerned, but how many newspapers carried his story on the front page, or how many minutes it made on the News at Ten.

This ability not to reflect on what is going on is a positive attribute for a foreign correspondent, who in this case has so little imagination and reflects so little on events that he reminds one of Captain MacWhirr in *Typhoon*. But if Gall has something of MacWhirr in him, then the opposite qualities were shown by a Reuter colleague in the very Conradian setting of the Congo – Serge Nabokov, cousin of Vladimir. During the Independence Day ceremony, an African snatched King Baudouin's sword and ran off with it. Nabokov's job was to sit at the telex machine and send off the "snap" (the Reuter word for "a top-urgent news item giving the bare bones of a story in the fewest words). Gall relates:

> . . . instead of rattling off the first urgent snap, he [Nabokov] had dithered about trying to decide on the correct form of words. As every agency journalist knows in a crisis like that, the style does not matter a hoot. All that matters is speed. Nigel [Ryan] said he had gone almost mad trying to force Serge to type out the essential story – that an African had run off with Baudouin's sword. . . . Serge was a distinguished old white Russian with perfect manners . . . but he was not the man for the humid jungle of Leopoldville and he simply cracked up.

So if it wasn't for people like Sandy Gall and Nigel Ryan then Serge Nabokov might still be in the Congo looking for the *mot juste*, but thanks to MacWhirr there was no delay in getting the news to the world that an African had gone off with King Baudouin's sword. After all, the only thing that matters is speed.

Needing to imagine

Anne Chisholm

Janet Frame
To the Is-Land: An Autobiography
253pp. Women's Press. £6.95.
0 7043 3904 8

With *To The Is-land*, the New Zealand novelist Janet Frame has taken a considerable risk. She has deliberately uncovered the roots of her private mythology and language, from which her ten novels (among them *Faces in the Water*, *Scented Gardens for the Blind* and *Living in the Maniototo*) and her collections of stories and poems have grown. Born in Dunedin in 1924, she spent most of her childhood and adolescence in Oamaru, a small town by the sea in Otago, on the South Island. She was one of five children. Her father worked for the railways and in some ways hers was a deprived childhood; the family was poor and she grew up knowing the terrors of debt and illness. Her bother was epileptic; Janet was often ashamed of being dirty, smelly and wretchedly dressed. But the family circle was full of strong characters and strong emotions, and both parents felt a deep respect for education. Her mother loved poetry; her grandmother sang her the poignant, unforgettable songs of the American South. Her father, although most of his "books" were illustrated papers and magazines, invested in the collected works of Oscar Wilde. Janet Frame's craving to learn was respected and it was hoped that she would grow up to be a teacher.

In her account of the first five years of her life Janet Frame shows unusual powers of recall. When she describes Betty, the family cow – "she'd open her mouth and yawn, flooding her potato and turnip and apple and grass-smelling breath into my face and showing her big worn-down teeth" – this is an advantage; but the beginning of the book is marred by an over-respectful attitude to the obvious ("Father known to us as 'Dad'") and a reverence for her own baby-talk ("Pitties" for pixies, "womp" for swamp). But a fascination with the sound, shape and resonance of words is at the core of *To the Is-land* and indeed of all Janet Frame's writing.

Reminiscences such as this of the early years of a sensitive child and future writer have a familiar rhythm, as Frame is certainly aware. Her childhood landmarks were more dramatic than most but what is different about this description of childhood is the way in which Janet Frame's emerging identity fed itself on the scraps and tags of fairy tales and verse. She manages to invoke past innocence, and show how stories, legends and poetic images were for her the magic keys to understanding and expression.

There is little sense of time or place in this account of a New Zealand upbringing, apart from a scattering of place names and mysterious Maori words, a mention of a beach picnic at Christmas and the Oamaru Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute (the Public Library). She was aware of the effects of the Depression and in due course she had a vaguely pro-Nazi teacher who spoke of the Yellow Peril and advocated "purity of race"; but her family life was so intense and her passion for words so strong that it was the formation of her internal world, not the discovery of the world outside that mattered. Of course the words themselves and all her cultural references and standards were English. "None of our English studies even supposed that such a thing as a New Zealand writer or New Zealand existed."

Later, Frame's complex, intense novels drew deeply from the well of childhood memories. Her first friend, Poppy, who lent her Grimms Fairy Tales; echoes from the tales themselves; the Scholar Gypsy, with whom, as a schoolgirl, she thought herself in love; a tawny velvet dress she had when she was four; all of these reappear in *Scented Gardens for the Blind* or *Living in the Maniototo*. Most strikingly, her sister Myrtle's recitation poem, "I met at Eve the Prince of Sleep . . . recurs again and again. Myrtle was drowned in the public swimming pool; the phrase takes on a sinister ring. In her fiction, Frame has been determined to transcend realism, explore the subconscious, enter fractured minds and uncover the connection between the writer's life and the work. This autobiography provides many clues to the working of her mind and talent, for despite a certain overwroughtness she is a writer of originality and power. Towards the end of this book she names her central quest: "My life had been for many years in the power of words. It was driven now by a constant search and need for what was, after all, only a word – imagination."

Forms of politeness

Judith Landry

Luigi Magnani
Il mio Morandi: Un saggio e cinquantotto lettere
127pp. Turin: Einaudi. L.20,000.
88 06 05423 6

This oddly titled volume seems to have given its subject the status of an institution, it consists of an essay on Morandi by his friend Luigi Magnani, followed by reproductions of twelve paintings and fifty-eight letters from Morandi to Magnani. The frontispiece is a photograph of the two men in the formal, slightly uneasy proximity which seems to have characterized their relationship; the essay is hagiographic in tone while the letters are a wonderland for deconstructionists.

The essay alternates minimal anecdotes with musings on the nature of Morandi's art. The musings are sometimes coloured, as it were, by music (Magnani has written on Beethoven, and music in Proust) Morandi is said to "make the national instrument ring with unprecedented chords", to have made use of "pre-existing notes but it have entrusted them to the original timbre of another instrument, thus giving them completely new reverberations and emotions". The anecdotes, though quiet, are sometimes revealing, often about their narrator. At the beginning of their acquaintance, Magnani presented Morandi with some valuable old musical instruments and asked for a painting of them; Morandi politely demurred, objecting that they might get broken, which Magnani thought unlikely unless the laws of gravity were to invert themselves; but the true reason, of course, was that "the objects chosen by him as pretexts for his compositions suggested themselves to his gaze not isolated in their particularity, but in relation to his whole inner world, from which they received their intensely allusive power". In short, those iridescent chimney-like bottles were, first and foremost, bottles of the mind. Morandi purchased some cheap musical equivalents from a market stall and kindly painted his first and last painting on commission.

Morandi is known to have been a courteous, unassuming, even saintly man who lived a textbook uneventful existence (talk of prices, for instance, made him "nervous"). Magnani writes of him with obvious affection and respect. Sometimes, with too much respect, when he describes Morandi packing a painting in special paper as though it were a sacred object, or carefully storing away bits of left-over colour in matchboxes, he engenders a peevish sense of iconoclasm in the reader.

The letters consist purely of greetings, acknowledgements, pious wishes, civil commonplaces, regrets over failed meetings. Like a figure in an Italian primer, Morandi addresses Magnani in the polite form throughout the twenty years they cover. While conceding that the letters do not contain a word about the paintings (though there is mention of frames) Magnani somewhat wildly describes Morandi's epistolatory style as redeeming words from the wear and tear of other people's use, "the sincere simple language of an open heart". The most one can honestly say of them is that Morandi seems to have been a very punctilious man. The quality of his painting is never in doubt, but words were not his language.

The Wagners of Brighton by Sir Anthony Wagner and Antony Dale (180pp. Phillimore Press, Shopwyke Hall, Chichester, Sussex. £9.95. 0 85033 445 4) traces the history of the Wagner family from 1708 when Melchior Wagner arrived in England from Silesia and soon after was appointed hatter to George I. His descendants remained royal hatters for three generations, two generations married French Protestant wives.

An art of dedication

C. R. Dodwell

WALTER CAHN

Romanesque Bible Illumination

308pp, with 200 black-and-white and 60 colour illustrations. Cornell University Press. £80.75.
0 8014 1446 6

This is a most handsome book. It is finely printed, beautifully and spaciously set out and with a large number of monochrome and excellent colour illustrations. It will appeal not only to othe scholar but to the general reader interested in the Bible, for its scope is much wider than the title suggests, providing an admirable survey of the illustrated Bible from the very earliest times to the Gothic. It focuses especially on the greatest of all periods of Bible illustration – the Romanesque – when monasteries reached new peaks of power and affluence and vied with each other in artistic terms, not least in the making of sumptuously illustrated and decorated Bibles for use in their own communities.

Walter Cahn begins by telling how the canon of the Bible text was slowly formulated, and then moves on to its earliest illustration, covering all those famous manuscripts which – despite the aridity of their titles (the Quedlinburg Itala, the Cotton Genesis, the Vienna Genesis, the Ashburnham Pentateuch and so on) – are particularly rich in history, for they present the ways in which the early Christian centuries visualized the events of the central book of Christendom. A well-illustrated description is given of the development of Bibles in the ninth and tenth centuries and, though the text becomes more packed, as it moves into the Romanesque eleventh and twelfth centuries, it always remains clear and interesting. Professor Cahn is particularly good at setting his artistic story in its historic background, convincingly associating the making of great Bibles in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the development of reform movements and the founding of new churches. This is very much confirmed by contemporary chronicles, and the chronicle of Liège, for example, tells how "on the consecration of the new monastery of Huy" the bishop "offered upon the altar fine copies of the Old and New Testaments".

The Bible was, of course, indispensable for new monasteries and churches and essential also for reform movements which (like most reform movements) wanted to get back to the purity of the true Faith. It was fortunate that the great Bible made for Cîteaux in the early days of its reformatory zeal was organized by an abbot, Stephen Harding, who could indulge his own taste for art before his Order was imbued by the puritanism of St Bernard. Its delightful pictures can still be savoured at Dijon, where small vignettes in other manuscripts show the new reform movement in action, for the early Cistercians are seen working in the fields, their habits tattered by the forests they have cleared as they manfully return to the message of physical labour enjoined by the original monastic rule. The pictures in Stephen Harding's Bible are themselves straightforward illustrations of the Bible text, and Cahn shows how, sometimes they present a parallel between the Old Testament and the New and on other occasions (as in the Pontefract Bible), interpret the text in such profound theological terms that today we can more readily appreciate the splendour of the paintings than the intricacy of thought behind them. As we know from a twelfth-century treatise on the arts, some of the artists of the time were highly educated, thinking men, well versed in the subtleties of theology. Indeed, scholarship goes hand in hand with the efflorescence of art. A note at the end of the fourth volume of Stephen Harding's Bible tells us that, in order to establish a good text, he had collated Latin Bibles from various centres and then consulted Jewish scholars about the Hebrew originals, and, as Cahn points out, one Italian Bible (illustrated in the book) actually begins with a portrayal of Moses holding up the first words of the Old Testament in Hebrew. All this was partly an expression of the renewal prompted by reform. But there was another side to the coin, for the increasing interest in Hebrew was provoked by heresy, one particular form of which was the total rejection of the Old Testament. This the Church needed to contain.

Because so many of the Bibles discussed here were for institutional use, they were extremely large and they must have been enormously expensive. The ingredients themselves were costly and it has been estimated that the skins of over 500 calves were needed to provide the vellum for the pages of the earliest surviving illustrated Bible from England (seventh-century, with an excellent reproduction here). Some of them weigh over half a hundredweight and have attracted names like "giant Bibles". The Bible was frequently referred to in the Middle Ages not as *the Biblia but as the Bibliotheca*, the library of books; and indeed it was a library of the books which the Church had accepted into its canon as being divinely inspired. With the Romanesque period, the Bible also became a library in a more literal sense, for it had had to be split up into volumes. It was, I suspect, primarily because Bibles, even from the seventh century, had tended to largeness that they did not attract the external embellishment of jewels and gold that one certainly finds in descriptions of Gospel Books – though it was not entirely unknown. The inscriptions of a lost Carolingian Bible indicate that it had been "adorned with jewels and gold" and they tell us more, for they identify the bishop who commissioned it and exhort the reader to appreciate it practically as well as spiritually: "Use me reader and give me a home in your own mind. And wash your hands before using this book."

Cahn is, of course, concerned with *the Bibles that survive. He has a wide-*ranging knowledge of the field and his book is so up-to-date that he must have read one article whilst it was at proof stage; though the publication of Sir Walter Oakeshott's long-awaited volumes on the Winchester Bible and of Rodney M. Thomson's discerning study, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey 1066–1235*, came too late for him to use.

One complaint must nevertheless be made: footnotes (or back-notes) in the sense of validating statements are completely missing and given the work and scholarship that have gone into the enterprise, this is a particularly regrettable omission. (There are a few notes, put to the back, but these serve only to remove the cumbersome shelf-marks of manuscripts, or references to the catalogue, from the flow of the text.) An expert will spot that this or that statement is based on the work of Köhler or Garrison or Boutemy or some other scholar (including articles by Cahn himself), but a book of this quality should enable the reader to trace a statement to its source. The illustrated catalogue of Bibles at the end includes good bibliographies, but this catalogue is itself selective. Apart from the inadequacy of the index, that is the only complaint I have to make of a publication which will be of value to all working in the Romanesque field.

This is also firmly the field of manuscript-painting, but work with painting too, for at times they were intimately associated. I do not myself see as close a kinship between the miniatures of a Cluniac manuscript and the famous frescoes of Berzé-la-Ville as Cahn suggests, though they reflect similar influences from Byzantium through Italy; but the connection between some manuscript-paintings and some frescoes is put beyond dispute by the well-known association between the paintings of the Winchester Bible and the superb mural paintings of Sigena. Nor is this a question of relating a "minor" art form to a "major", for the size of some of these Bibles means that their illustrations are large in scale. Indeed, the illustrations of the Bury and modern water-colours. Those of the Bury Bible were even made as separate pictures which were then stuck into the Bible. Many of the pictures of the Romanesque Bibles, it goes without saying, are of the highest quality.

What is missing in Romanesque paintings indeed is not great art but great names. Art was still anonymous and, curiously enough, the exceedingly rare paintings actually claimed by artists were not always first-rate. "Signatures" on Romanesque manuscript-paintings did not have the significance of those on post-medieval pictures, where they state achievement, pride and self-advertisement. If the signature was that of a monk, it was to identify the artist who dedicated this work to the Almighty. Since, as one Romanesque monastic artist emphasized, such talent was itself a gift from God, the dedication presumably was one of effort, and we should perhaps relate Romanesque "signatures" (such as they are) to application rather than to accomplishment. This emerges more clearly where the calligrapher, who was also occasionally the illuminator, is concerned, for the laboriousness entailed in copying out whole manuscripts is obvious, and sometimes the scribe was prepared to remark on its fatiguing nature. This is particularly true in the Spain of the tenth and eleventh centuries, where one scribe expressed his views: "Let me tell you that the work is heavy: it makes the eyes misty, bows the back, crushes the ribs and belly, brings pain to the kidneys and makes the body ache all over. Therefore, O reader, turn the leaves gently and keep your fingers away from the letters." After the Romanesque period the complaints continued: "He who wrote this book sweated and froze"; "How glad was I when this book came to an end"; "For such a price as this, I will never write again".

As we know from letters and chronicles, the special problem of the scribe in monasteries (and no doubt elsewhere) was the coldness of the *northern winters, which numbed the* fingers and made writing difficult or *even impossible. This would also afflict* the painters of manuscripts. There is a hint in one source that the task was considered too arduous for women, which is difficult to understand though perhaps all work is onerous when one is not trained to it, and the training of the artists of the numerous Romanesque Bibles made in differing parts of Western Christendom was very varied.

In the earlier decades of our own century, a dispute over medieval artists arose which reached a point of acrimony difficult to surpass. The two opponents were G. G. Coulton and Dom Aldan Gasquet and the issue of contention was how far the monastic as opposed to the secular artist had contributed to medieval arts, especially during the Romanesque period. This was only a small part of a wider disagreement about monasteries and monks; the altercation about artists continued into the 1930s and, though fortunately now drained of its acerbity, the problem remains. We still do not know the degree to which these great Bibles were illustrated by monks trained within their own monasteries or by secular professionals.

King Antiochus IV of Syria (175–163 BC) attempted to enforce Hellenic pagan rites in Judaea: an illustration to 1 Maccabees in the Winchester Bible (volume IV, folio 350 verso).

The names of monk painters are rare, and those of lay painters rarer still. The identity of a particularly significant secular painter, however, is known almost accidentally; it occurs in an account of work promoted by the sacristans of Bury St Edmunds between 1121 and 1148. He is Hugo of Bury, who is described as having "incomparably illustrated" a great Bible. This latter was identified by M. R. James as the splendid Bury Bible at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. (Let me add here that, despite a statement to the contrary by Cahn, we do now know why on folio 147 verso of this Bible, Elkanah is handing robes to his two wives instead of the "portions" of the Vulgate, since Beryl Smalley has explained it to us.) Hugo was not only a great artist but one of versatility for, as well as painting, he sculpted and cast in bronze. It is reasonably certain that the beautifully written text of his Bible was also in the hand of a lay craftsman, and by the time we arrive at the second half of the twelfth century, only a few years later, we have reached a period when great Bibles were mainly the work of secular professionals. An example is a Tuscan Bible in four volumes which was commissioned by *secular people* and begun in 1168 for a church in Pisa. The final volume contains the actual accounts, which were published in their original Latin by Professor Knut Berg and are now Englished by Cahn. They give us useful insights into the organization behind these illustrated and decorated Bibles. The compositor, or *person in charge*, Master Viviano, took the largest fee, and the chief scribe was paid more than the illuminator. More than sixty lay people contributed to the money required. Their gifts were often made for the souls of loved ones, just as, in the great days of monasticism, the making of artistic Bibles had also been seen as an offering to God.

Inventories investigated

Colin Davies

SEARS JAYNE

Library Catalogues of the English Renaissance

224pp. St Paul's Bibliographies, 23 West End Terrace, Winchester SO22
SBN: £15
0 906795 17 5

Few historians of the more general sort would be likely to turn to the St Paul's Bibliographies with the expectation of enlightenment, stimulation or new vistas. *Library Catalogues of the English Renaissance*, which first appeared in 1956 and has been re-issued with a new preface and notes, confounds these presuppositions, leaving one with the uncomfortable feeling that "the general historian" might more accurately be classified as "the idle historian". The range of subject-matter helps a lot here, and while the main text is tough going and very much a matter for occasional, highly selective reference, the long introduction is extraordinarily good. The section on the reasons for the time-span chosen (1500-1640) is a matter of technical interest mainly to bibliographers, but the description of the methods used to track down titles and reassemble library lists which in many cases existed only in a defective form or have since been lost, compels attentive admiration. It comes as a surprise to anyone but the expert that Wolsey's domestic administration was responsible for bringing in and enforcing the most valuable source of information - the inventories that had to be made after 1521 for any estate valued at more than £5. Equally, it is depressing to read of piles of these, hitherto unused and now more or less *unusable, stagnating in basements in* Somerset House. Sears Jayne does an excellent bit of descriptive detection, charting the movement of various types of document from the archdeacons' courts to public registries or Somerset House and then, after 1955, in many cases to the county archives. Jayne's own preference for the general administration at Oxford, the care taken over books and source material relating to them, comes out strongly, compared with what seems to be a more haphazard system at Cambridge. But then, in this field, it would be difficult to escape from the massive achievements of Thomas James's subject catalogue for the Bodleian in 1605, followed by his alphabetical catalogue in 1620.

The introduction throws up some intriguing highlights and shadows for the period 1500-1640. While there is nothing new about the description of what happened to the monastic libraries in 1538-39 it is unexpected to find that cathedral libraries seem to have declined steadily in the sixteenth century. Perhaps the vast quantities of theological and polemical writings found happier or safer homes in private libraries, colleges and schools. The growth of these is well analysed by Jayne, as is the changing function of a library in the English Renaissance.

It would be exceedingly rash, however, to measure a scholar's quality by the representation of his books alone; the early seventeenth-century lawyers, historians and antiquarians would pass comfortably enough, but from the entries in this volume Sir Thomas More would have to rank somewhere between an ineffectual don and a village schoolmaster, while Thomas Cromwell, a considerable patron of humanist writers, does not get a mention.

This is certainly a book that should be read by anyone planning to visit or use an ancient library. One gets an appreciation of the hard work put in by amateurs and professionals over a century and a half, trying out schemes that worked or failed, slowly evolving techniques of organization and classification which soon came to be taken for granted.

Imperial ideologue

I. A. A. Thompson

JOHN M. HEADLEY

The Emperor and his Chancellor: A study of the imperial chancellery under Gattinara

188pp. Cambridge University Press. £24.
0 521 24444 7

Mercurino Gattinara, the Turin lawyer and humanist who rose to be Charles V's Grand Chancellor, is generally regarded as the dominant influence on the political and personal development of the young Emperor after the death of his mentor, Chièvres, in 1521, and as the ideologue of a divinely ordained, Habsburg world empire inspired by Dante and centred on Italy. For a figure of such importance he has been remarkably little studied, perhaps, as John M. Headley suggests, because this *universalist man*, a Piedmontese serving the House of Habsburg, is not easily accommodated in any single national pantheon. So, whereas the Florentine, Machiavelli, has a splendid avenue named after him in Turin, the native, Gattinara, rates only a back alley.

Professor Headley has not set out to write *a biography nor an analysis of* Gattinara's political ideals, though as chancellor he was responsible for the confection of Charles's imperial seal, the ordering of his titles, and the designation "SCCRM", as well as for orchestrating the propaganda campaign to justify the attack on Rome in 1527, to which Headley devotes a fascinating chapter. For Gattinara's political principles, however, we must still rely mainly on Brandi. Headley's concern is, as his subtitle announces, a study of the chancellor's employment of his office. In a succession of densely argued chapters he concentrates on Gattinara's attempt to create an administrative structure appropriate to a supranational empire. Gattinara aimed to reform, to rationalize, to simplify, to economize, but also to reshape Charles V's administration to fit it for the empire it had to govern. He took to Spain in 1518 (he was to spend eight of the next eleven years there) a conception of the chancellorship moulded in the *unitary*, Burgundian tradition that combined consultative, judicial, as well as diplomatic functions, and he sought to superimpose this alien, supervisory chancellorship over the more splintered Castilian system of councils and secretaries.

His conception of the chancellorship was, therefore, the administrative equivalent of his *conception of the* empire; the two were interdependent. His administrative programme entailed chancellery supremacy, and that meant the dominance of Gattinara over the secretaries, Cobos and Lalemand, and of a universalist, rather than nationalist, pro-Italian, rather than pro-French, Aragonese, rather than Castilian, and Erasmist, rather than rigorist, line on the great issues of the day. The animosity between Gattinara and Lalemand that erupted in 1528 was not only a conflict between chancellor and secretary but between a "buonissimo italiano" and a "bon français". Gattinara stood for one particular view of imperial priorities and, as events after Pavia show, it was *not the view that prevailed* for most of these years. Headley emphasizes much more strongly than Brandi how insecure Gattinara's position was and how uncomfortable his personal relationship with Charles V until the last two or three years of his life, punctuated by complaints about money, strikes, threats of resignation and last-minute reconciliations. In the event, the secretaries won. The administrative imperialism of the chancellery was defeated. The chancellor was too great an officer, too formal and too powerful. The secretaryship offered greater flexibility, enjoyed continuous and more direct contact with the monarch and was less politically dangerous. After Gattinara there were no more Grand Chancellors.

To the known sources Headley has been able to add access to the chancellor's, frankly rather disappointing, private archives and the *discovery of two or three* crucial administrative memoranda, which are printed as appendices. He has, however, done less work on Castile than might have been expected and his grasp of early sixteenth-century Castilian administrative history is not always sure. There is surely no great problem about Alfonso de Valdés being both Gattinara's secretary and *Secretario del Emperador* (p 83); in 1516 Cobos had been in precisely the same position with respect to Chièvres, and had Headley used Quitaciones de Corte and the earliest *legajos* of Estado in Simancas, instead of relying entirely on Keniston, he would have known that the secretaryship of state was in formal existence in October 1529 *when Cobos, already described* as "secretario del secreto" in 1523, was given the title officially.

Short, technical, detailed, suggestive and expensive, this book lifts a corner of the veil from the conflicting tendencies in Charles V's court, but we still need to know a lot more about the processes of policy-making and about the administrative role of (among others) the President of Castile, who was to perform many of the managerial functions of the chancellor set out by Hanneton in 1518. In particular, Charles V remains a shadowy figure. It is not at all clear who, if anyone, was behind him. Gattinara was certainly not the dominating influence that *Brandi portrayed. The chancellor* emerges as a less significant character than has hitherto been believed, or even perhaps than the author would like us to believe. Professor Headley, willy-nilly, makes it entirely understandable why Gattinara's death in June 1530 "barely produced a ripple in the onrushing political world".

The campaign trail

John Rogister

JOHN CHILDS

Armies and Warfare in Europe 1648–1789

216pp. Manchester University Press. £16.50.
0 7190 0880 8

It is a refreshing experience to read a book that manages to be both informative and stimulating on an important and wide-ranging subject, all within the confines of a mere two hundred pages. John Childs's earlier books, *The Army of Charles II* and *The Army, James II and the Glorious Revolution*, had already revealed his originality as a historian of politico-military relations. Now his interests have broadened, to include *the study* of European armies and warfare generally, between the Treaty of Westphalia and the outbreak of the French Revolution.

Armies and Warfare in Europe 1648–1789 falls into two unequal parts: the less and major part is an examination of the methods and techniques of warfare, the second is a consideration of their impact on civil society. Mr Childs has cast his net widely over the wars of Britain, France, Sweden, Prussia, Russia and the Habsburg lands, and his book is full of new insights. He accepts the existence of "rules" of war during the period, rules that were "an extension of an accepted and desirable social harmony", but which did not appear "to have spread beyond the officer corps into the populace". These rules, as he shows, controlled the relationship between armies of similar origins and tastes in war, but were not very effective in regulating the conduct of armies in campaigns and destruction.

Childs gives a fascinating account of the decline of the parade-ground tactics on the development of the infantry and cavalry. Those of the seventeenth century gave way to chaos on the field of battle. The needs and restrictions of the musket meant that soldiers had to stand in a long line in order for all of them to fire forwards at the same time; subsequently, systematic fire was achieved by replacing the long line by a series of three parallel lines, each firing in turn. But, as the author demonstrates, there were few battles in the eighteenth century when two opposing lines of infantry blasted one another in the open field. Usually one side was entrenched in a defensive position and dared the other to attack. The aim was *to break the opponent's morale. For* this reason Frederick II concentrated on two lines only, with the emphasis on speed of fire and rapid reloading rather than accuracy of fire (a practice that served the Prussian army well a century later at the time of Sadowa and the needle-gun). Conversely, under Marshal Daun, the Habsburg armies dealt with the problem of the fearsome Prussian infantry by choosing to occupy strong defensive positions and so obliging the enemy to attack them (a lesson *their successors forgot* in 1866).

To Charles XII of Sweden, and again to Frederick II, went the credit for realizing the full potential of a fast cavalry: previously speed had not been the essence of cavalry action and too much use had been made of pistol and carbine and not enough of cold steel. The new changes determined the outcome of battles like Hohenfriedburg (1745) and Rossbach (1757) – that turning-point of the Seven Years' War. Unfortunately, Childs does not discuss the question why there was so little vigorous pursuit of a broken enemy, a *recurrent feature* of eighteenth-century battles.

A particularly interesting section of his book is that dealing with what he calls the *fortress mania* of the period. Because roads were bad or non-existent, armies had to rely on waterways for the transport of their supplies, and these abounded in the Austrian Netherlands *and* in Northern France. At the junction of a land route and a waterway was to be found a fort or defended town with garrisons that could not be ignored by an invading army. The invader had to besiege each fortress: this was no easy task, as by 1750 "the art of fortification had far outstripped the science of gunnery". It regained for the defensive much of the initiative that had been lost through the introduction of gunpowder. But like all the other military innovations, siege warfare involved high casualties. Childs unfolds the harsh realities of the soldier's life: inadequate care for the wounded, who were often stripped and left to die on the field (as at Fontenoy), high incidence of disease, conventional *indifference; all these factors took* a heavy toll of tired, dirty, badly fed soldiers.

Towards the end of the book, Childs turns to his second theme: the impact of armies and war on society itself. He perhaps errs a little in assuming that the conduct of war *should* somehow have been compatible with the *interests of the civil population*. He certainly demonstrates that it was not. Apart from the high cost of warfare in terms of taxation, the billeting of troops and the exaction of forage, the population bore the brunt of the passage of the warring armies. Marlborough and Villars impassively burned villages that lay between their armies and their front lines. The inhabitants of any besieged *town had* cause to fear if the commander of its garrison was a hero intent upon making a courageous stand: a prolonged and unsuccessful resistance on his part gave the enemy the right to pillage and to rape. These were also the traditions of warfare. Fortunately for some, not so for others, the wars of the *ancien régime* were fought repeatedly in the same, familiar cockpits of Europe.

Mr Childs touches on many other themes including, for instance, the use of the army in the policing of towns and riot control. Here, as elsewhere, he is always stimulating even when he is not breaking new ground. But the overwhelming impression left by his book is one of the stark contrasts of war. *La guerre en dentelles* will never quite exercise the same enchantment after one has encountered the brutal reality in the pages of this book.